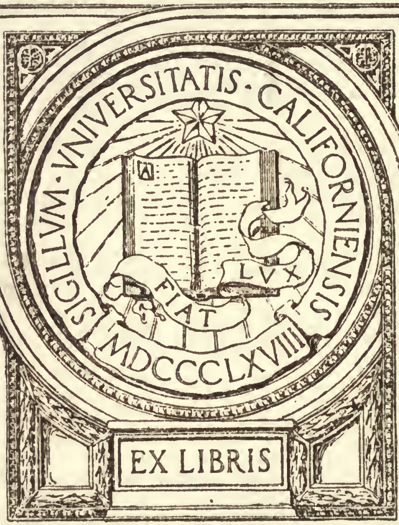
·THE·
·JOHN·FRYER·
·CHINESE·LIBRARY·



EX LIBRIS

Main Lib.

Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN. *Popular Illustrated Edition.* 12mo, $2.00.

The Same. *Illustrated Edition.* A new edition, from new plates, printed with red-line border. With an Introduction of more than 30 pages, and a bibliography of the various editions and languages in which the work has appeared, by Mr. George Bullen, of the British Museum. Over 100 illustrations. 8vo, $3.00.

The Same. *Popular Edition.* With Introduction, and Portrait of "Uncle Tom." 12mo, $1.00.

DRED (sometimes called "Nina Gordon"). 12mo, $1.50.

THE MINISTER'S WOOING. 12mo, $1.50.

AGNES OF SORRENTO. 12mo, $1.50.

THE PEARL OF ORR'S ISLAND. 12mo, $1.50.

THE MAY-FLOWER, etc. 12mo, $1.50.

OLDTOWN FOLKS. 12mo, $1.50.

SAM LAWSON'S FIRESIDE STORIES. New and enlarged Edition. Illustrated. 12mo, $1.50.

MY WIFE AND I. New Edition. Illustrated. 12mo, $1.50.

WE AND OUR NEIGHBORS. New Edition. Illustrated. 12mo, $1.50.

POGANUC PEOPLE. New Edition. Illustrated 12mo, $1.50.

The above eleven 12mo volumes, uniform, in box, $16.00.

HOUSE AND HOME PAPERS. 16mo, $1.50.

LITTLE FOXES. 16mo, $1.50.

THE CHIMNEY-CORNER. 16mo, $1.50.

A DOG'S MISSION, etc. New Edition. Illustrated. Small 4to, $1.25.

QUEER LITTLE PEOPLE. New Edition. Illustrated. Small 4to, $1.25.

LITTLE PUSSY WILLOW. New Edition. Illustrated. Small 4to, $1.25.

RELIGIOUS POEMS. Illustrated. 16mo, gilt edges, $1.50.

PALMETTO LEAVES. Sketches of Florida. Illustrated. 16mo, $1.50.

FLOWERS AND FRUIT. From Mrs. Stowe's Writings. 16mo, $1.00.

SCENES FROM MRS. STOWE'S WORKS. Paper, 15 cents.

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO., *Publishers,*

BOSTON.

THE MATCH GAME.

"*I knelt down, and laid my mallet at her feet. 'Beautiful princess!' said I, 'behold your enemies, conquered, await your sentence.'*"

(Page 349

Wm Thayer

MY WIFE AND I:

OR,

HARRY HENDERSON'S HISTORY.

BY HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

Author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "We and Our Neighbors,"
"Poganuc People," etc.

With Illustrations.

BOSTON:
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY.
New York: 11 East Seventeenth Street.
The Riverside Press, Cambridge.

MAIN LIBRARY
JOHN FRYER
CHINESE LIBRARY

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1871,
BY J. B. FORD AND COMPANY,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.
Printed by H. O. Houghton & Company.

PS2954
M9
1861
MAIN

PREFACE.

DURING the passage of this story through The Christian Union, it has been repeatedly taken for granted by the public press that certain of the characters are designed as portraits of really existing individuals.

They are not. The supposition has its rise in an imperfect consideration of the principles of dramatic composition. The novel-writer does not profess to paint *portraits* of any individual men and women in his personal acquaintance. Certain characters are required for the purposes of his story. He conceives and creates them, and they become to him real living beings, acting and speaking in ways of their own. But on the other hand, he is guided in this creation by his knowledge and experience of men and women, and studies individual instances and incidents only to assure himself of the possibility and probability of the character he creates. If he succeeds in making the character real and natural, people often are led to identify it with some individual of their acquaintance. A slight incident, an anecdote, a paragraph in a paper, often furnishes the foundation of such a character; and the work of drawing it is like the process by which Professor Agassiz from one bone reconstructs the whole form of an unknown fish. But to apply to

751609

any single living person such delineation is a mistake, and might be a great wrong both to the author and to the person designated.

For instance, it being the author's purpose to show the embarrassment of the young champion of progressive principles, in meeting the excesses of modern reformers, it came in her way to paint the picture of the modern emancipated young woman of advanced ideas and free behavior. And this character has been mistaken for the portrait of an *individual*, drawn from actual observation. On the contrary, it was not the author's intention to draw an individual, but simply to show the type of a class. Facts as to conduct and behavior similar to those she has described are unhappily too familiar to residents of New York. But in this as in other cases the author has simply used isolated facts in the construction of a dramatic character suited to the design of the story. If the readers of to-day will turn back to Miss Edgeworth's *Belinda*, they will find that this style of manners, these assumptions and mode of asserting them, are no new things. In the character of Harriet Freke, Miss Edgeworth vividly portrays the manners and sentiments of the modern emancipated women of our times, who think themselves

> " Ne'er so sure our passion to create,
> As when they touch the brink of all we hate."

Certainly the author knows no original fully answering to the character of Mrs. Cerulean, though she has heard such an one described; and, doubtless, there are traits in her equally attributable to all fair enthusiasts who mistake the influence of their own personal charms and fascinations over the other sex, for real superiority of intellect.

There are happily several young women whose vigorous self-sustaining career, in opening paths of usefulness alike for themselves and others, are like that of Ida Van Arsdel; and the true experiences of a lovely New York girl first suggested the character of Eva; yet both of them are, in execution, strictly imaginary paintings, adapted to the story. In short, some real character, or, in many cases, some two or three, furnish the germs, but the germs only, out of which new characters are developed.

In close: The author wishes to dedicate this Story to the many dear, bright young girls whom she is so happy as to number among her choicest friends. No matter what the critics say of it, if *they* like it; and she hopes from them, at least, a favorable judgment.

H. B. S.

TWIN-MOUNTAIN HOUSE, N.H.
October, 1871.

CONTENTS:

PAGE
I. THE AUTHOR DEFINES HIS POSITION . . 1
II. MY CHILD-WIFE 5
III. OUR CHILD-EDEN 17
IV. MY SHADOW-WIFE 32
V. I START FOR COLLEGE 43
VI. MY DREAM-WIFE 52
VII. THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION . . . 66
VIII. THE BLUE MISTS 76
IX. AN OUTLOOK INTO LIFE 84
X. COUSIN CAROLINE 99
XI. WHY DON'T YOU TAKE HER? . . . 113
XII. I LAY THE FIRST STONE IN MY FOUNDATION 126
XIII. BACHELOR CHAMBERS 136
XIV. HAPS AND MISHAPS 144
XV. I MEET A VISION 154
XVI. THE GIRL OF OUR PERIOD . . . 166
XVII. I AM INTRODUCED INTO SOCIETY . . . 182
XVIII. THE YOUNG LADY PHILOSOPHER . . 193
XIX. FLIRTATION 204
XX. I BECOME A FAMILY FRIEND . . 216
XXI. I DISCOVER THE BEAUTIES OF FRIENDSHIP . 226
XXII. I AM INTRODUCED TO THE ILLUMINATI. . 234
XXIII. I RECEIVE A MORAL SHOWER-BATH . . 240
XXIV. AUNT MARIA 247
XXV. A DISCUSSION OF THE WOMAN QUESTION . 257
XXVI. COUSIN CAROLINE AGAIN . . . 272

PAGE
XXVII. EASTER LILIES 280
XXVIII. ENCHANTMENT AND DISENCHANTMENT . 290
XXIX. A NEW OPENING 307
XXX. PERTURBATIONS 319
XXXI. THE FATES 327
XXXII. THE GAME OF CROQUET 336
XXXIII. THE MATCH GAME 345
XXXIV. LETTER FROM EVA VAN ARSDEL . 351
XXXV. DOMESTIC CONSULTATIONS . . . 360
XXXVI. WEALTH *versus* LOVE 366
XXXVII. FURTHER CONSULTATIONS . . . 373
XXXVIII. MAKING LOVE TO ONE'S FATHER-IN-LAW 379
XXXIX. ACCEPTED AND ENGAGED . . . 388
XL. CONGRATULATIONS, ETC. 396
XLI. THE EXPLOSION 401
XLII. THE TALK OVER THE PRAYER-BOOK . 409
XLIII. BOLTON 417
XLIV. THE WEDDING JOURNEY 421
XLV. MY WIFE'S WARDROBE 429
XLVI. LETTERS FROM NEW YORK . . . 435
XLVII. AUNT MARIA'S DICTUM 441
XLVIII. OUR HOUSE 448
XLIX. PICNICKING IN NEW YORK . . . 453
L. NEIGHBORS 458
LI. MY WIFE PROJECTS HOSPITALITIES . 464
LII. PREPARATIONS FOR OUR DINNER PARTY 468
LIII. THE HOUSE-WARMING. 471

CHAPTER I.

THE AUTHOR DEFINES HIS POSITION.

IT appears to me that the world is returning to its second childhood, and running mad for Stories. Stories! Stories! Stories! everywhere; stories in every paper, in every crevice, crack and corner of the house. Stories fall from the pen faster than leaves of autumn, and of as many shades and colorings. Stories blow over here in whirlwinds from England. Stories are translated from the French, from the Danish, from the Swedish, from the German, from the Russian. There are serial stories for adults in the *Atlantic*, in the *Overland*, in the *Galaxy*, in *Harper's*, in *Scribner's*. There are serial stories for youthful pilgrims in *Our Young Folks*, the *Little Corporal*, "*Oliver Optic*," the *Youth's Companion*, and very soon we anticipate newspapers with serial stories for the nursery. We shall have those charmingly illustrated magazines, the *Cradle*, the *Rocking Chair*, the *First Rattle*, and the *First Tooth*, with successive chapters of "Goosy Goosy Gander," and "Hickory Dickory Dock," and "Old Mother Hubbard," extending through twelve, or twenty-four, or forty-eight numbers.

I have often questioned what Solomon would have said if he had lived in our day. The poor man, it appears, was somewhat *blasé* with the abundance of literature in his times, and remarked that much study was weariness to the flesh. Then, printing was not invented, and "books" were all copied by hand, in those very square Hebrew letters where each letter is about as careful a bit of work as a grave-stone. And yet, even with all these restrictions and circumscriptions, Solomon rather testily remarked, "Of making many books there is no end!" What would he have said had he looked over a modern publisher's catalogue?

It is understood now that no paper is complete without its serial story, and the spinning of these stories keeps thousands of wheels and spindles in motion. It is now understood that whoever wishes to gain the public ear, and to propound a new theory, must do it in a serial story. Hath any one in our day, as in St. Paul's, a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation—forthwith he wraps it up in a serial story, and presents it to the public. We have prison discipline, free-trade, labor and capital, woman's rights, the temperance question, in serial stories. We have Romanism and Protestantism, High Church, and Low Church and no Church, contending with each other in serial stories, where each side converts the other, according to the faith of the narrator.

We see that this thing is to go on. Soon it will be necessary that every leading clergyman should embody in his theology a serial story, to be delivered from the pulpit Sunday after Sunday. We look forward to announcements in our city papers such as these: The Rev. Dr. Ignatius, of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, will begin a serial romance, to be entitled "St. Sebastian and the Arrows," in which he will embody the duties, the trials, and the temptations of the young Christians of our day. The Rev. Dr. Boanerges, of Plymouth Rock Church, will begin a serial story, entitled "Calvin's Daughter," in which he will discuss the distinctive features of Protestant theology. The Rev. Dr Cool Shadow will go on with his interesting romance of "Christianity a Dissolving View,"—designed to show how everything is, in many respects, like everything else, and all things lead somewhere, and everything will finally end somehow, and that therefore it is important that everybody should cultivate general sweetness, and have the very best time possible in this world.

By the time all these romances get to going, the system of teaching by parables, and opening one's mouth in dark sayings, will be fully elaborated. *Pilgrim's Progress* will be nowhere. The way to the celestial city will be as plain in everybody's mind as the way up Broadway—and so much more interesting! Finally all science and all art will be explained, conducted, and directed by serial stories, till the present life and the life to come shall form only one grand romance. This will be about the time of the Millennium.

Meanwhile, I have been furnishing a story for the *Christian Union*, and I chose the subject which is in everybody's mind and mouth, discussed on every platform, ringing from everybody's tongue, and coming home to every man's business and bosom, to wit:

My Wife and I.

I trust that Miss Anthony and Mrs. Stanton, and all the prophetesses of our day, will remark the humility and propriety of my title. It is not I and My Wife—oh no! It is My Wife and I. What am I, and what is my father's house, that I should go before my wife in anything?

"But why specially for the *Christian Union?*" says Mr. Chadband. Let us in a spirit of Love inquire.

Is it not evident why, O beloved? Is not that firm in human nature which stands under the title of MY WIFE AND I, the oldest and most venerable form of Christian union on record? Where, I ask, will you find a better one?—a wiser, a stronger, a sweeter, a more universally popular and agreeable one?

To be sure, there have been times and seasons when this ancient and respectable firm has been attacked as a piece of old fogyism, and various substitutes for it proposed. It has been said that "MY WIFE AND I" denoted a selfish, close corporation inconsistent with a general, all-sided diffusive, universal benevolence; that MY WIFE AND I, in a millennial community, had no particular rights in each other more than any of the thousands of the brethren and sisters of the human race. They have said, too, that MY WIFE AND I, instead of an indissoluble unity, were only temporary partners, engaged on time, with the liberty of giving three months' notice, and starting off to a new firm.

It is not thus that we understand the matter.

My Wife and I, as we understand it, is the sign and symbol of more than any earthly partnership or union—of something sacred as religion, indissoluble as the soul, endless as eternity—the symbol chosen by Almighty Love to represent his redeeming, eternal union with the soul of man.

A fountain of eternal youth gushes near the hearth of every household. All men and women that have loved truly, have had their romance in life—their poetry in existence.

So I, in giving my history, disclaim all other sources of interest. Look not for trap-doors, or haunted houses, or deadly conspiracies, or murders, or concealed crimes, in this history, for you will not find one. You shall have simply and only the old story—old as the first chapter of Genesis—of Adam stupid, desolate, and lonely without Eve, and how he sought and how he found her.

This much, on mature consideration, I hold to be about the sum and substance of all the romances that have ever been written, and so long as there are new Adams and new Eves in each coming generation, it will not want for sympathetic listeners.

So I, Harry Henderson—a plain Yankee boy from the mountains of New Hampshire, and at present citizen of New York—commence my story.

My experiences have three stages.

First, My child-wife, or the experiences of childhood.

Second, My shadow-wife, or the dreamland of the future.

Third, my real wife, where I saw her, how I sought and found her.

In pursuing a story simply and mainly of love and marriage, I am reminded of the saying of a respectable serving man of European experiences, who, speaking of his position in a noble family, said it was not so much the wages that made it an object as "*the things it enabled a gentleman to* *pick up*." So in our modern days as we have been observing, it is not so much the story, as the things it gives the author a chance to say. The history of a young American man's progress toward matrimony, of course brings him among the most stirring and exciting topics of the day, where all that relates to the joint interests of man and woman has been thrown into the arena as an open question, and in relating our own experiences, we shall take occasion to keep up with the spirit of this discussing age in all these matters.

CHAPTER II.

MY CHILD-WIFE.

THE Bible says it is not good for man to be alone. This is a truth that has been borne in on my mind, with peculiar force, from the earliest of my recollection. In fact when I was only seven years old I had selected my wife, and asked the paternal consent.

You see, I was an unusually lonesome little fellow, because I belonged to the number of those unlucky waifs who come into this mortal life under circumstances when nobody wants or expects them. My father was a poor country minister in the mountains of New Hampshire with a salary of six hundred dollars, with nine children. I was the tenth. I was not expected; my immediate predecessor was five years of age, and the gossips of the neighborhood had already presented congratulations to my mother on having "done up her work in the forenoon," and being ready to sit down to afternoon leisure.

Her well-worn baby clothes were all given away, the cradle was peaceably consigned to the garret, and my mother was now regarded as without excuse if she did not preside at the weekly prayer-meeting, the monthly Maternal Association, and the Missionary meeting, and perform besides regular pastoral visitations among the good wives of her parish.

No one, of course, ever thought of voting her any little extra salary on account of these public duties which absorbed so much time and attention from her perplexing domestic cares—rendered still more severe and onerous by my father's limited salary. My father's six hundred dollars, however, was considered by the farmers of the vicinity as being a princely income, which accounted satisfactorily for everything, and had he not been considered by them as "about the smartest man in the State," they could not have gone up to such a figure. My mother was one of those gentle, soft-spoken, quiet little women who, like oil, permeate every crack and joint of life with smoothness.

With a noiseless step, an almost shadowy movement, her hand and eye were every where. Her house was a miracle of neatness and order—her children of all ages and sizes under her perfect control, and the accumulations of labor of all descriptions which beset a great family where there are no servants, all melted away under her hands as if by enchantment.

She had a divine magic too, that mother of mine; if it be magic to commune daily with the supernatural. She had a little room all her own, where on a stand always lay open the great family Bible, and when work pressed hard and children were untoward, when sickness threatened, when the skeins of life were all crossways and tangled, she went quietly to that room, and kneeling over that Bible, took hold of a warm, healing, invisible hand, that made the crooked straight, and the rough places plain.

"Poor Mrs. Henderson—another boy!" said the gossips on the day that I was born. "What a shame! poor woman. Well, I wish her joy!"

But she took me to a warm bosom and bade God bless me! All that God sent to her was treasure. "Who knows," she said cheerily to my father, "this may be our brightest."

"God bless him," said my father, kissing me and my mother, and then he returned to an important treatise which was to reconcile the decrees of God with the free agency of man, and which the event of my entrance into this world had interrupted for some hours. The sermon was a perfect success I am told, and nobody that heard it ever had a moment's further trouble on that subject.

As to me, my outfit for this world was of the scantest—a few yellow flannel petticoats and a few slips run up from some of my older sisters' cast off white gowns, were deemed sufficient.

The first child in a family is its poem—it is a sort of nativity play, and we bend before the young stranger, with gifts, "gold, frankincense and myrrh." But the tenth child in a poor-family is *prose*, and gets simply what is due to comfort. There are no superfluities, no fripperies, no idealities about the tenth cradle.

As I grew up I found myself rather a solitary little fellow in a great house, full of the bustle and noise and conflicting claims of older brothers and sisters, who had got the floor in the stage of life before me, and who were too busy with their own wants, schemes and plans, to regard me.

I was all very well so long as I kept within the limits of babyhood. They said I was the handsomest baby ever pertaining to the family establishment, and as long as that quality and condition lasted I was made a pet of. My sisters curled my golden locks and made me wonderful little frocks, and took me about to show me. But when I grew bigger, and the golden locks were sheared off and replaced by straight light hair, and I was inducted into jacket and pantaloons, cut down by Miss Abia Ferkin from my next brother's last year's suit, outgrown—then I was turned upon the world to shift for myself. Babyhood was over, and manhood not begun—I was to run the gauntlet of boyhood.

My brothers and sisters were affectionate enough in their way, but had not the least sentiment, and as I said before they had each one their own concerns to look after. My eldest brother was in college, my next brother was fitting for college in a neighboring academy, and used to walk ten miles daily to his lessons and take his dinner with him. One of my older sisters was married, the two next were handsome lively girls, with a retinue of beaux, who of course took up a deal of their time and thoughts. The sister next before me was four years above me on the lists of life, and of course looked down on me as a little boy unworthy of her society. When her two or three chattering girl friends came to see her and they had their dolls and their baby houses to manage, I was always in the way. They laughed at my awkwardness, criticised my nose, my hair, and my ears to my face, with that feminine freedom by which the gentler sex joy to put down the stronger one when they have it at advantage. I used often to retire from their society swelling with impotent wrath, at their free comments. "I won't play with you," I would exclaim. "Nobody wants you," would be the rejoinder. "We've been wanting to be rid of you this good while."

But as I was a stout little fellow, my elders thought it advisable to devolve on me any such tasks and errands as interfered with their comfort. I was sent to the store when the wind howled and the frost bit, and my brothers and sisters preferred a warm corner. "He's only a boy, he can go, or he can do or he can wait," was always the award of my sisters.

My individual pursuits, and my own little stock of interests, were of course of no account. I was required to be in a perfectly free, disengaged state of mind, and ready to drop every thing at a moment's warning from any of my half dozen seniors. "Here, Hal, run down cellar and get me a dozen apples," my brother would say, just as I had half built a block house. "Harry, run up stairs and get the book I left on the bed—Harry, run out to the barn and get the rake I left there—Here, Harry, carry this up garret—Harry, run out to the tool shop and get that"—were sounds constantly occurring—breaking up my private cherished little enterprises of building cob-houses, making mill dams and bridges, or loading carriages, or driving horses. Where is the mature Christian who could bear with patience the interruptions and crosses in his daily schemes, that beset a boy?

Then there were for me dire mortifications and bitter disappointments. If any company came and the family board was filled and the cake and preserves brought out, and gay conversation made my heart bound with special longings to be in at the fun, I heard them say, "No need to set a plate for Harry—he can just as well wait till after." I can recollect many a serious deprivation of mature life, that did not bring such bitterness of soul as that sentence of exclusion. Then when my sister's admirer, Sam Richards, was expected, and the best parlor fire lighted, and the hearth swept, how I longed to sit up and hear his funny stories, how I hid in dark corners, and lay off in shadowy places, hoping to escape notice and so avoid the activity of the domestic police. But no, "Mamma, mustn't Harry go to bed?" was the busy outcry of my sisters, desirous to have the deck cleared for action, and superfluous members finally disposed of.

Take it for all in all—I felt myself, though not wanting in the supply of any physical necessity, to be somehow, as I said, a very lonesome little fellow in the world. In all that busy, lively, gay, bustling household I had no mate.

"I think we must send Harry to school," said my mother, gently, to my father, when I had vented this complaint in her maternal bosom. "Poor little fellow, he is an odd one! —there isn't exactly any one in the house for him to mate with!"

So to school I was sent, with a clean checked apron, drawn up tight in my neck, and a dinner basket, and a brown towel on which I was to be instructed in the wholesome practice of sewing. I went, trembling and blushing, with many an apprehension of the big boys who had promised to thrash me when I came; but the very first day I was made blessed in the vision of my little child-wife, Susie Morril.

Such a pretty, neat little figure as she was! I saw her first standing in the school-room door. Her cheeks and neck were like wax; her eyes clear blue; and when she smiled, two little dimples flitted in and out on her cheeks, like those in a sunny brook. She was dressed in a pink gingham frock, with a clean white apron fitted trimly about her little round neck. She was her mother's only child, and always daintily dressed.

"Oh, Susie dear," said my mother, who had me by the hand, "I've brought a little boy here to school, who will be a mate for you."

How affably and graciously she received me—the little Eve—all smiles and obligingness and encouragement for the lumpish, awkward Adam. How she made me sit down on a seat by her, and put her little white arm cosily over my neck, as she laid the spelling-book on her knee, saying—"*I* read in Baker. Where do you read?"

Friend, it was Webster's Spelling-book that was their text-book, and many of you will remember where "Baker" is in that literary career. The column of words thus headed was a mile-stone on the path of infant progress. But my mother had been a diligent instructress at home, and I an apt scholar, and my breast swelled as I told little Susie that I had gone beyond Baker. I saw "respect mingling with surprise" in her great violet eyes; my soul was enlarged—my little frame dilated, as turning over to the picture of the "old man who found a rude boy on one of his trees stealing apples," I answered her that I had read there!

"Why-*ee!*" said the little maiden; "only think, girls—he reads in readings!"

I was set up and glorified in my own esteem; two or three girls looked at me with evident consideration.

"Don't you want to sit on our side?" said Susie, engagingly. "I'll ask Miss Bessie to let you, 'cause she said the big boys always plague the little ones." And so, as she was a smooth-tongued little favorite, she not only introduced me to the teacher, but got me comfortably niched beside her dainty self on the hard, backless seat, where I sat swinging my heels, and looking for all the world like a rough little short-tailed robin, just pushed out of the nest, and surveying the world with round, anxious eyes. The big boys quizzed me, made hideous faces at me from behind their spelling-books, and great hulking Tom Halliday threw a spit ball that lodged on the wall just over my head, by way of showing his contempt for me; but I looked at Susie, and took courage. I thought I never saw anything so pretty as she was. I was never tired with following the mazes of her golden curls. I thought how dainty and nice and white her pink dress and white apron were; and she wore a pair of wonderful little red shoes; her tiny hands were so skillful and so busy! She turned the hem of my brown towel, and basted it for me so nicely, and then she took out some delicate ruffling that was her school work, and I admired her bright, fine needle and fine thread, and the waxen little finger crowned with a little brass thimble, as she sewed away with an industrious steadiness. To me the brass was gold, and her hands were pearl, and she was a little fairy princess!—yet every few moments she turned her great blue eyes on me, and smiled and nodded her little head knowingly, as much as to bid me be of good cheer, and I felt a thrill go right to my heart, that beat delightedly under the checked apron.

"Please, ma'am," said Susan, glibly, "mayn't Henry go out to play with the girls? The big boys are so rough."

And Miss Bessie smiled, and said I might; and I was a blessed little boy from that moment. In the first recess Susie instructed me in playing "Tag," and "Oats, peas, beans, and barley, O," and in "Threading the needle," and playing "Open the gates as high as the sky, to let King George and his court pass by"—in all which she was a proficient, and where I needed a great deal of teaching and encouraging.

But when it came to more athletic feats, I could distinguish myself. I dared jump off from a higher fence than she could, and covered myself with glory by climbing to the top of a five-railed gate, and jumping boldly down; and moreover, when a cow appeared on the green before the school-house door, I marched up to her with a stick and ordered her off, with a manly stride and a determined voice, and chased her with the utmost vigor quite out of sight. These proceedings seemed to inspire Susie with a certain respect and confidence. I could read in "readings," jump off from high fences, and wasn't afraid of cows! These were manly accomplishments!

The school-house was a long distance from my father's, and I used to bring my dinner. Susie brought hers also, and many a delightful picnic have we had together. We made ourselves a house under a great button-ball tree, at whose foot the grass was short and green. Our house was neither more nor less than a square, marked out on the green turf by stones taken from the wall. I glorified myself in my own eyes and in Susie's, by being able to lift stones twice as heavy as she could, and a big flat one, which nearly broke my back, was deposited in the centre of the square, as our table. We used a clean pocket-handkerchief for a tablecloth; and Susie was wont to set out our meals with great order, making plates and dishes out of the button-ball-leaves. Under her direction also, I fitted up our house with a pantry, and a small room where we used to play wash dishes, and set away what was left of our meals. The pantry was a stone cupboard, where we kept chestnuts and apples, and what remained of our cookies and gingerbread. Susie was fond of ornamentation, and stuck bouquets of golden-rod and aster around in our best room, and there we received company, and had select society come to see us. Susie brought her doll to dwell in this establishment, and I made her a bedroom and a little bed of milkweed-silk to lie on. We put her to bed and tucked her up when we went into school—not without apprehension that those savages, the big boys, might visit our Eden with devastation. But the girls' recess came first, and we could venture to leave her there taking a nap till our play-time came; and when the girls went in Susie rolled her nursling in a napkin and took her safely into school, and laid her away in a corner of her desk, while the dreadful big boys were having their yelling war-whoop and carnival outside.

"How nice it is to have Harry gone all day to school," I heard one of my sisters saying to the other. "He used to be so in the way, meddling and getting into everything"— "And listening to everything one says," said the other. "Children have such horridly quick ears. Harry always listens to what we talk about."

"I think he is happier now, poor little fellow," said my mother. "He has somebody now to play with." This was the truth of the matter.

On Saturday afternoons, I used to beg of my mother to let me go and see Susie; and my sisters, nothing loth, used to brush my hair and put on me a stiff, clean, checked apron, and send me trotting off, the happiest of young lovers.

How bright and fair life seemed to me those Saturday afternoons, when the sun, through the picket-fences, made golden-green lines on the turf—and the trees waved and whispered, and I gathered handfuls of golden-rod and asters to ornament our house, under the button-wood tree!

Then we used to play in the barn together. We hunted for hens' eggs, and I dived under the barn to dark places where she dared not go; and climbed up to high places over the hay-mow, where she trembled to behold me—bringing stores of eggs, which she received in her clean white apron.

This daintiness of outfit excited my constant admiration. I wore stiff, heavy jackets and checked aprons, and was constantly, so my sisters said, wearing holes through my knees and elbows for them to patch; but little Susie always appeared to me fresh and fine and untumbled; she never dirtied her hands or soiled her dress. Like a true little woman, she seemed to have nerves through all her clothes that kept them in order. This nicety of person inspired me with a secret, wondering reverence. How could she always be so clean, so trim, and every way so pretty, I wondered? Her golden curls always seemed fresh from the brush, and even when she climbed and ran, and went with me into the barn-yard, or through the swamp and into all sorts of compromising places, she somehow picked her way out bright and unsoiled.

But though I admired her ceaselessly for this, she was no less in admiration of my daring strength and prowess. I felt myself a perfect Paladin in her defense. I remember that the chip-yard which we used to cross, on our way to the barn, was tyrannized over by a most loud-mouthed and arrogant old turkey-cock, that used to strut and swell and gobble and chitter greatly to her terror. She told me of different times when she had tried to cross the yard alone, how he had jumped upon her and flapped his wings, and thrown her down, to her great distress and horror. The first time he tried the game on me, I marched up to him, and by a dexterous pass, seized his red neck in my hand, and confining his wings down with my arm, walked him ingloriously out of the yard.

How triumphant Susie was, and how I swelled and exulted to her, telling her what I would do to protect her under every supposable variety of circumstances! Susie had confessed to me of being dreadfully afraid of "bears," and I took this occasion to tell her what I would do if a bear should actually attack her. I assured her that I would get father's gun and shoot him without mercy—and she listened and believed. I also dilated on what I would do if robbers should get into the house; I would, I informed her, immediately get up and pour shovelfuls of hot coal down their backs—and wouldn't they have to run? What comfort and security this view of matters gave us both! What bears and robbers were, we had no very precise idea, but it was a comfort to think how strong and adequate to meet them in any event I was.

Sometimes, of a Saturday afternoon, Susie was permitted to come and play with me. I always went after her, and solicited the favor humbly at the hands of her mother, who, after many washings and dressings and cautions as to her clothes, delivered her up to me, with the condition that she was to start for home when the sun was half an hour high. Susie was very conscientious in watching, but for my part I never agreed with her. I was always sure that the sun was an hour high, when she set her little face dutifully homeward. My sisters used to pet her greatly during these visits. They delighted to twine her curls over their fingers, and try the effects of different articles of costume on her fair complexion. They would ask her, laughing, would she be my little wife, to which she always answered with a grave affirmative.

Yes, she was to be my wife; it was all settled between us. But when? I didn't see why we must wait till we grew up. She was lonesome when I was gone, and I was lonesome when she was gone. Why not marry her now, and take her home to live with me? I asked her and she said she was willing, but mamma never would spare her. I said I would get my mamma to ask her, and I knew she couldn't refuse, because my papa was the minister.

I turned the matter over and over in my mind, and thought sometime when I could find my mother alone, I would introduce the subject. So one evening, as I sat on my little stool at my mother's knees, I thought I would open the subject, and began:

"Mamma, why do people object to early marriages?"

"Early marriages?" said my mother, stopping her knitting, looking at me, while a smile flashed over her thin cheeks: "what's the child thinking of?"

"I mean, why can't Susie and I be married now? I want her here. I'm lonesome without her. Nobody wants to play with me in this house, and if she were here we should be together all the time."

My father woke up from his meditation on his next Sunday's sermon, and looked at my mother, smiling. A gentle laugh rippled her bosom.

"Why, dear," she said, "don't you know your father is a poor man, and has hard work to support his children now? He couldn't afford to keep another little girl."

I thought the matter over, sorrowfully. Here was the pecuniary difficulty, that puts off so many desiring lovers, meeting me on the very threshold of life.

"Mother," I said, after a period of mournful consideration, "I wouldn't eat but just half as much as I do now, and I'd try not to wear out my clothes, and make 'em last longer."

My mother had very bright eyes, and there was a mingled flash of tears and laughter in them, as when the sun winks through rain drops. She lifted me gently into her lap and drew my head down on her bosom.

"Some day, when my little son grows to be a man, I hope

God will give him a wife he loves dearly. 'Houses and lands are from the fathers; but a good wife is of the Lord,' the Bible says."

"That's true, dear," said my father, looking at her tenderly; "nobody knows that better than I do."

My mother rocked gently back and forward with me in the evening shadows, and talked with me and soothed me, and told me stories how one day I should grow to be a good man—a minister, like my father, she hoped—and have a dear little house of my own.

"And will Susie be in it?"

"Let's hope so," said my mother. "Who knows?"

"But, mother, arn't you sure? I want you to say it will be certainly."

"My little one, only our dear Father could tell us that," said my mother. "But now you must try and learn fast, and become a good strong man, so that you can take care of a little wife."

CHAPTER III.

OUR CHILD-EDEN.

MY mother's talk aroused all the enthusiasm of my nature. Here was a motive, to be sure. I went to bed and dreamed of it. I thought over all possible ways of growing big and strong rapidly—I had heard the stories of Samson from the Bible. How did he grow so strong? He was probably once a little boy like me. "Did he go for the cows, I wonder," thought I—"and let down very big bars when his hands were little, and learn to ride the old horse bare-back, when his legs were very short?" All these things I was emulous to do; and I resolved to lift very heavy pails full of water, and very many of them, and to climb into the mow, and throw down great armfuls of hay, and in every possible way to grow big and strong.

I remember the next day after my talk with my mother was *Saturday*, and I had leave to go up and spend it with Susie.

There was a meadow just back of her mother's house, which we used to call the mowing lot. It was white with daisies, yellow with buttercups, with some moderate share of timothy and herds-grass intermixed. But what was specially interesting to us was, that, down low at the roots of the grass, and here and there in moist, rich spots, grew wild strawberries, large and juicy, rising on nice high stalks, with three or four on a cluster. What joy there was in the possession of a whole sunny Saturday afternoon to be spent with Susie in this meadow! To me the amount of happiness in the survey was greatly in advance of what I now have in the view of a three weeks' summer excursion.

When, after multiplied cautions and directions, and careful adjustment of Susie's clothing, on the part of her mother, Susie was fairly delivered up to me; when we had turned our backs on the house and got beyond call, then our bliss was complete. How carefully and patronizingly I helped her up the loose, mossy, stone wall, all hedged with a wilderness of golden-rod, ferns, raspberry bushes, and asters! Down we went through this tangled thicket, into such a secure world of joy, where the daisied meadow received us to her motherly bosom, and we were sure nobody could see us.

We could sit down and look upward, and see daisies and grasses nodding and bobbing over our heads, hiding us as completely as two young grass birds; and it was such fun to think that nobody could find out where we were! Two bobolinks, who had a nest somewhere in that lot, used to mount guard in an old apple tree, and sit on tall, bending twigs, and say, "Chack! chack! chack!" and flutter their black and white wings up and down, and burst out into most elaborate and complicated babbles of melody. These were our only associates and witnesses. We thought that they knew us, and were glad to see us there, and wouldn't tell anybody where we were for the world. There was an exquisite pleasure to us in this sense of utter isolation—of being hid with each other where nobody could find us.

We had worlds of nice secrets peculiar to ourselves. Nobody but ourselves knew where the "thick spots" were, where the ripe, scarlet strawberries grew; the big boys never suspected them, we said to one another, nor the big girls; it was our own secret, which we kept between our own little selves. How we searched, and picked, and chatted, and oh'd and ah'd to each other as we found wonderful places, where the strawberries passed all belief!

But profoundest of all our wonderful secrets were our discoveries in the region of animal life. We found, in a tuft of grass overshadowed by wild roses, a grass bird's nest. In vain did the cunning mother creep yards from the cherished spot, and then suddenly fly up in the wrong place; we were not to be deceived. Our busy hands parted the lace curtains of fern, and, with whispers of astonishment, we counted the little speckled, blue-green eggs. How round and fine and exquisite, past all gems polished by art, they seemed; and what a mystery was the little curious smooth-lined nest in which we found them! We talked to the birds encouragingly. "Dear little birds," we said, "don't be afraid; nobody but we shall know it;" and then we said to each other, "Tom Halliday never shall find this out, nor Jim Fellows." They would carry off the eggs and tear up the nest; and our hearts swelled with such a responsibility for the tender secret, that it was all we could do that week to avoid telling it to everybody we met. We informed all the children at school that we knew something that they didn't —something that we *never* should tell!—something *so* wonderful!—something that it would be wicked to tell of—for mother said so; for be it observed that, like good children, we had taken our respective mothers into confidence, and received the strictest and most conscientious charges as to our duty to keep the birds' secret.

In that enchanted meadow of ours grew tall, yellow lilies, glowing as the sunset, hanging down their bells, six or seven in number, from high, graceful stalks, like bell towers of fairy land. They were over our heads sometimes, as they rose from the grass and daisies, and we looked up into their golden hearts spotted with black, with a secret, wondering joy.

"Oh, don't pick them, they look too pretty," said Susie to me once when I stretched up my hand to gather one of these. "Let's leave them to be here when we come again! I like to see them wave."

And so we left the tallest of them; but I was not forbidden to gather handfuls of the less wonderful specimens that grew only one or two on a stalk. Our bouquets of flowers increased with our strawberries.

Through the middle of this meadow chattered a little brook, gurgling and tinkling over many-colored pebbles, and here and there collecting itself into a miniature waterfall, as it pitched over a broken bit of rock. For our height and size, the waterfalls of this little brook were equal to those of Trenton, or any of the medium cascades that draw the fashionable crowd of grown-up people; and what was the best of it was, it was *our* brook, and *our* waterfall. *We* found them, and we verily believed nobody else but ourselves knew of them.

By this waterfall, as I called it, which was certainly a foot and a half high, we sat and arranged our strawberries when our baskets were full, and I talked with Susie about what my mother had told me.

I can see her now, the little crumb of womanhood, as she sat, gaily laughing at me. "*She* didn't care a bit," she said. *She* had just as lief wait till I grew to be a man. Why, we could go to school together, and have Saturday afternoons together. "Don't you mind it, Hazzy Dazzy," she said, coming close up to me, and putting her little arms coaxingly round my neck; "we love each other, and it's ever so nice now."

I wonder what the reason is that it is one of the first movements of affectionate feeling to change the name of the loved one. Give a baby a name, ever so short and ever so musical, where is the mother that does not twist it into some other pet name between herself and her child. So Susie, when she was very loving, called me Hazzy, and sometimes would play on my name, and call me Hazzy Dazzy, and sometimes Dazzy, and we laughed at this because it was between us; and we amused ourselves with thinking how surprised people would be to hear her say Dazzy, and how they would wonder who she meant. In like manner, I used to call her Daisy when we were by ourselves, because she seemed to me so neat and trim and pure, and wore a little flat hat on Sundays just like a daisy.

"I'll tell you, Daisy," said I, "just what I'm going to do – I'm going to grow strong as Samson did."

"Oh, but how can you?" she suggested, doubtfully.

"Oh, I'm going to run and jump and climb, and carry ever so much water for Mother, and I'm to ride on horseback and go to mill, and go all round on errands, and so I shall get to be a man fast, and when I get to be a man I'll build a house all on purpose for you and me—I'll build it all myself; it shall have a parlor and a dining-room and kitchen, and bed-room, and well-room, and chambers"—

"And nice closets to put things in," suggested the little woman.

"Certainly, ever so many—just where you want them, there I'll put them," said I, with surpassing liberality. "And then, when we live together, I'll take care of you—I'll keep off all the lions and bears and panthers. If a bear should come at *you*, Daisy, I should tear him right in two, just as Samson did."

At this vivid picture, Daisy nestled close to my shoulder, and her eyes grew large and reflective. "We shouldn't leave poor Mother alone," said she.

"Oh, no; she shall come and live with us," said I, with an exalted generosity. "I will make her a nice chamber on purpose, and *my* mother shall come, too."

"But she can't leave your father, you know."

"Oh, father shall come, too—when he gets old and can't preach any more. I shall take care of them all."

And my little Daisy looked at me with eyes of approving credulity, and said I was a brave boy; and the bobolinks chittered and chattered applause as they sang and skirmished and whirled up over the meadow grasses; and by and by, when the sun fell low, and looked like a great golden ball, with our hands full of lilies, and our baskets full of strawberries, we climbed over the old wall, and toddled home.

After that, I remember many gay and joyous passages in that happiest summer of my life. How, when autumn came, we roved through the woods together, and gathered such stores of glossy brown chestnuts. What joy it was to us to scuff through the painted fallen leaves and send them flying like showers of jewels before us! How I reconnoitered and marked available chestnut trees, and how I gloried in being able to climb like a cat, and get astride high limbs and shake and beat them, and hear the glossy brown nuts fall with a rich, heavy thud below, while Susie was busily picking up at the foot of the tree. How she did flatter me with my success and prowess! Tom Halliday might be a bigger boy, but he could never go up a tree as I could; and as for that great clumsy Jim Fellows, she laughed to think what a figure he would make, going out on the end of the small limbs, which would be sure to break and send him bundling down. The picture which Susie drew of the awkwardness of the big boys often made us laugh till the tears rolled down our cheeks. To this day I observe it as a weakness of my sex that we all take it in extremely good part when the pretty girl of our heart laughs at other fellows in a snug, quiet way, just between one's dear self and herself alone. We encourage our own dear little cat to scratch and claw the sacred memories of Jim or Tom, and think that she does it in an extremely cunning and diverting way—it being understood between us that there is no malice in it—that "Jim and Tom are nice fellows enough, you know—only that somebody else is so superior to them," etc.

Susie and I considered ourselves as an extremely forehanded, well-to-do partnership, in the matter of gathering in our autumn stores. No pair of chipmunks in the neighborhood conducted business with more ability. We had a famous cellar that I dug and stoned, where we stored away our spoils. We had chestnuts and walnuts and butternuts, as we said, to last us all winter, and many an earnest consultation and many a busy hour did the gathering and arranging of these spoils cost us.

Then, oh, the golden times we had when father's barrels of new cider came home from the press! How I cut and gathered and selected bunches of choice straws, which I took to school and showed to Susie, surreptitiously, at intervals, during school exercises, that she might see what a provision of bliss I was making for Saturday afternoons. How Susie was sent to visit us on these occasions, in leather shoes and checked apron, so that we might go in the cellar; and how, mounted up on logs on either side of a barrel of cider, we plunged our straws through the foamy mass at the bunghole, and drew out long draughts of sweet cider! I was sure to get myself dirty in my zeal, which she never did; and then she would laugh at me and patronize me, and wipe me up in a motherly sort of way. "How *do* you always get so dirty, Harry?" she would say, in a truly maternal tone of reproof. "How *do* you keep so clean?" I would say, in wonder; and she would laugh, and call me her dear, dirty boy. She would often laugh at me, the little elf, and make herself distractingly merry at my expense, but the moment she saw that the blood was getting too high in my cheeks, she would stroke me down with praises, as became a wise young daughter of Eve.

Besides all this, she had her little airs of moral superiority, and used occasionally to lecture me in the nicest manner. Being an only darling, she herself was brought up in the strictest ways in which little feet could go; and the nicety of her conscience was as unsullied as that of her dress. I was hot-tempered and heady, and under stress of great provocation would come as near swearing as a minister's son could possibly do. When the big boys ravaged our house under the tree, or threw sticks at us, I used to stretch every permitted limit, and scream, "Darn you!" and "Confound you!" with a vigor and emphasis that made it almost equal to something a good deal stronger.

On such occasions Susie would listen pale and frightened, and, when reason came back to me, gravely lecture me, and bring me into the paths of virtue. She used to rehearse to me the teachings of her mother about all manner of good things.

I have her image now in my mind, looking so crisp and composed and neat in her sobriety, repeating, for my edification, the hymn which contained the good child's ideal in those days:

"Oh, that it were my chief delight
To do the things I ought,
Then let me try with all my might
To mind what I am taught.

Whene'er I'm told, I'll freely bring
Whatever I have got,
And never touch a pretty thing,
When mother tells me not.

If she permits me, I may tell
About my little toys,
But if she's busy or unwell,
I must not make a noise."

I can hear now the delicious lisp of my little saint, and see the gracious gravity of her manner. To my mind, she was unaccountably well established in the ways of virtue, and I listened to her little lectures with a secret reverence.

Susie was especially careful in the observation of Sunday, and as that is a point where children are apt to be particularly weak, she would exhort me to rigorous exactitude.

I kept it, first, by thinking that I should see *her* at church, and by growing very precise about my Sunday clothes, whereat my sisters winked at each other and laughed slyly. Then at church we sat in great square pews adjoining to each other. It was my pleasure to peep through the slats at Susie. She was wonderful to behold then, all in white, with a profusion of blue ribbons and her little flat hat over her curls—and a pair of dainty blue shoes peeping out from her dress.

She informed me that little girls never must think about their clothes in meeting, and so I supposed she was trying to be entirely absorbed from earthly vanities, unconscious of the fixed and earnest stare with which I followed every movement.

Human nature is but partially sanctified, however, in little saints as well as grown up ones, and I noticed that occasionally, probably by accident, the great blue eyes met mine, and a smile, almost amounting to a sinful giggle, was with difficulty choked down. She was, however, a most conscientious little puss and recovered herself in a moment, and looked gravely upward at the minister, not one word of whose sermon could she by any possibility understand, severely devoting herself to her religious duties, till exhausted nature gave way. The little lids would close over the eyes like blue pimpernel before a shower,—the head would drop and nod, till finally the mother would dispense the little christian from further labors, by laying her head on her lap and drawing her feet up comfortably upon the seat, to sleep out to the end of the sermon.

When winter came on I beset my older brother to make me a sled. Sleds, such as every boy in Boston or New York now rejoices in, were blessings in our parts unknown; our sled was of rough, domestic manufacture.

My brother, laughing, asked if my sled was intended to draw Susie on, and on my earnest response in the affirmative he amused himself with painting it in colors, red and blue, most glorious to behold.

My soul was magnified within me when I first started with this stylish establishment to wait on Susie.

What young fellow does not exult in a smart team when he has a girl whom he wants to dazzle? Great was my joy and pride when I first stopped at Susie's and told her to hurry on her things, for I had come to draw her to school!

What a pretty picture she made in her little blue knit hood and mittens, her bright curls flying and cheeks glowing with the keen winter air! There was a long hill on the way to school, and seated on the sled behind her, I careered gloriously down with exultation in my breast, while a stream of laughter floated on the breeze behind us. That was a winter of much coasting down hill, of red cheeks and red noses, of cold toes, which we never minded, and of abundant jollity. Susie, under her mother's careful showing, knit me a pair of red mittens, warming to the heart and delightful to the eyes; and I piled up wood and carried water for Mother, and by vigorous economy earned money enough to buy Susie a great candy heart as big as my two hands, that had the picture of two doves tied together by a blue ribbon on one side, and on the other two very red hearts skewered together by an arrow.

No work of art ever gave greater and more unmingled delight. Susie gave it a prominent place in her baby-house, —and though it was undeniably sweet, as certain little nibbling trials on its edges had proved, yet the artistic sense was stronger than the palate, and the candy heart was kept to be looked at and rejoiced in.

Susie's mother was an intimate and confidential friend of my mother, and a most docile and confiding sheep of my father's flock. She regarded her minister's family, and all that belonged to it, as something set apart and sacred. My mother had imparted to her the little joke of my matrimonial wishes, and the two matrons had laughed over it together, and then sighed, and said, "Ah! well, stranger things have happened." Susie's mother told how she used to know her husband when he was a little boy, and what if it should be! and then they strayed on to the general truth that this was a world of uncertainty, and we never can tell what a day may bring forth.

Our little idyl, too, was rather encouraged by my brothers and sisters, who made a pet and plaything of Susie, and diverted themselves by the gravity and honesty with which we devoted ourselves to each other. Oh! dear ignorant days—sweet little child-Eden—why could it not last?

But it could not. It was fleeting as the bobolink's song, as the spotted yellow lilies, as the grass and daisies. My little Daisy was too dear to the angels to be spared to grow up in our coarse world.

The winter passed and spring came, and Susie and I rejoiced in the first bluebird, and found blue and white violets together, and went to school together, till the heats of summer came on. Then a sad epidemic began to linger around in our mountains, and to be heard of in neighboring villages, and my poor Daisy was scorched by its breath.

I remember well our last afternoon together in the meadow, where, the year before, we had gathered strawberries. We went down into it in high spirits; the strawberries were abundant, and we chatted and picked together gaily, till Daisy began to complain that her head ached and her throat was sore. I sat her down by the brook, and wet her curls with the water, and told her to rest there, and let me pick for her. But pretty soon she called me. She was crying with pain. "Oh! Hazzy, dear, I must go home," she said. "Take me to Mother." I hurried to help her, for she cried and moaned so that I was frightened. I began to cry, too, and we came up the steps of her mother's house sobbing together.

When her mother came out the little one suppressed her tears and distress for a moment, and turning, threw her arms around my neck and kissed me. "Don't cry any more, Hazzy," she said; "we'll see each other again."

Her mother took her up in her arms and carried her in, and I never saw my little baby-wife again on this earth! Not where the daisies and buttercups grew; nor where the golden lilies shook their bells, and the bobolinks trilled; not in the school-room, with its many child-voices; not in the old square pew in church—never, never more that trim little maiden form, those violet blue eyes, those golden curls of hair, were to be seen on earth!

My Daisy's last kisses, with the fever throbbing in her veins, very nearly took me with her. From that time I have only indistinct remembrances of going home crying, of turning with a strange loathing from my supper, of creeping up and getting into bed, shivering and burning, with a thumping and beating pain in my head.

The next morning the family doctor pronounced me a case of the epidemic (scarlet fever) which he said was all about among children in the neighborhood.

I have dim, hot, hazy recollections of burning, thirsty, head-achey days, when I longed for cold water, and could not get a drop, according to the good old rules of medical practice in those times. I dimly observed different people sitting up with me every night, and putting different medicines in my unresisting mouth; and day crept slowly after day, and I lay idly watching the rays of sunlight and flutter of leaves on the opposite wall.

One afternoon, I remember, as I lay thus listless, I heard the village bell strike slowly—six times. The sound wavered and trembled with long and solemn intervals of shivering vibration between. It was the numbering of my Daisy's little years on earth,—the announcement that she had gone to the land where time is no more measured by day and night, for there shall be no night there.

When I was well again I remember my mother told me that my little Daisy was in heaven, and I heard it with a dull, cold chill about my heart, and wondered that I could not cry.

I look back now into my little heart as it was then, and remember the paroxysms of silent pain I used to have at times, deep within, while yet I seemed to be like any other boy.

I heard my sisters one day discussing whether I cared much for Daisy's death.

"He don't seem to, much," said one.

"Oh, children are little animals, they forget what's out of sight," said another.

But I did not forget,—I could not bear to go to the meadow where we gathered strawberries,—to the chestnut trees where we had gathered nuts,—and oftentimes, suddenly, in work or play, that smothering sense of a past, forever gone, came over me like a physical sickness.

When children grow up among older people and are pushed and jostled, and set aside in the more engrossing interests of their elders, there is an almost incredible amount of timidity and dumbness of nature, with regard to the expression of inward feeling,—and yet, often at this time the instinctive sense of pleasure and pain is fearfully acute. But the child has imperfectly learned language. His stock of words, as yet, consists only in names and attributes of outward and physical objects, and he has no phraseology with which to embody a mere emotional experience.

What I felt when I thought of my little playfellow, was a dizzying, choking rush of bitter pain and anguish. Children can feel as acutely as men and women,—but even in mature life as experience has no gift of expression.

My mother alone, with the divining power of mothers, kept an eye on me. "Who knows," she said to my father, "but this death may be a heavenly call to him."

She sat down gently by my bed one night and talked with me of heaven, and the brightness and beauty there, and told me that little Susie was now a fair white angel.

I remember shaking with a tempest of sobs.

"But I want her *here*," I said. "I want to see her."

My mother went over all the explanations in the premises, —all that can ever be said in such cases, but I only sobbed the more.

"*I can't see her!* Oh mother, mother!"

That night I sobbed myself to sleep and dreamed a blessed dream.

It seemed to me that I was again in our meadow, and that it was fairer than ever before; the sun shone gaily, the sky was blue, and our great, golden lily stocks seemed mysteriously bright and fair, but I was wandering lonesome and solitary. Then suddenly my little Daisy came running to meet me in her pink dress and white apron, with her golden curls hanging down her neck. "Oh Daisy, Daisy!" said I running up to her. "Are you alive?—they told me that you were dead."

"No, Hazzy, dear, I am not dead,—never you believe that," she said, and I felt the clasp of her soft little arms round my neck. "Didn't I tell you we'd see each other again?"

"But they told me you were dead," I said in wonder—and I thought I held her off and looked at her,—she laughed gently at me as she often used to, but her lovely eyes had a mysterious power that seemed to thrill all through me.

"I am not dead, dear Hazzy," she said. "We never die where I am—I shall love you always," and with that my dream wavered and grew misty as when clear water breaks an image into a thousand glassy rings and fragments.

I thought I heard lovely music, and felt soft, clasping arms, and I awoke with a sense of being loved and pitied, and comforted.

I cannot describe the vivid, penetrating sense of reality which this dream left behind it. It seemed to warm my whole life, and to give back to my poor little heart something that had been rudely torn away from it. Perhaps there is no reader that has not had experiences of the wonderful power which a dream often exercises over the waking hours for weeks after—and it will not appear incredible that after that, instead of shunning the meadow where we used to play, it was my delight to wander there alone, to gather the strawberries—tend the birds' nests, and lie down on my back in the grass and look up into the blue sky through an overarching roof of daisies, with a strange sort of feeling of society, as if my little Daisy were with me.

And is it not perhaps so? Right along side of this troublous life, that is seen and temporal, may lie the green pastures and the still waters of the unseen and eternal, and they who know us better than we know them, can at any time step across that little rill that we call Death, to minister to our comfort.

For what are these child-angels made, that are sent down to this world to bring so much love and rapture, and go from us in such bitterness and mourning? If we believe in Almighty Love we must believe that they have a merciful and tender mission to our wayward souls. The love wherewith we love them is something the most utterly pure and unworldly of which human experience is capable, and we must hope that every one who goes from us to the world of light, goes holding an invisible chain of love by which to draw us there.

Sometimes I think I would never have had my little Daisy grow older on our earth. The little child dies in growing into womanhood, and often the woman is far less lovely than the little child. It seems to me that lovely and loving childhood, with its truthfulness, its frank sincerity, its pure, simple love, is so sweet and holy an estate that it would be a beautiful thing in heaven to have a band of heavenly children, guileless, gay and forever joyous—tender Spring blossoms of the Kingdom of Light. Was it of such whom he had left in his heavenly home our Saviour was thinking, when he took little children up in his arms and blessed them, and said, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven?"

CHAPTER IV.

MY SHADOW-WIFE.

MY Shadow Wife! Is there then substance in shadow? Yea, there may be. A shadow—a spiritual presence—may go with us where mortal footsteps cannot go; walk by our side amid the roar of the city: talk with us amid the sharp clatter of voices; come to us through closed doors, as we sit alone over our evening fire; counsel, bless, inspire us; and though the figure cannot be clasped in mortal arms—though the face be veiled—yet this wife of the future may have a power to bless, to guide, to sustain and console. Such was the dream-wife of my youth.

Whence did she come? She rose like a white, pure mist from that little grave. She formed herself like a cloud-maiden from the rain and dew of those first tears.

When we look at the apparent recklessness with which great sorrows seem to be distributed among the children of the earth, there is no way to keep our faith in a Fatherly love, except to recognize how invariably the sorrows that spring from love are a means of enlarging and dignifying a human being. Nothing great or good comes without birth-pangs, and in just the proportion that natures grow more noble, their capacities of suffering increase.

The bitter, silent, irrepressible anguish of that childish bereavement was to me the awakening of a spiritual nature. The little creature who, had she lived, might have grown up perhaps into a common-place woman, became a fixed star in the heaven-land of the ideal, always drawing me to look upward. My memories of her were a spring of refined and tender feeling, through all my early life. I could not then write; but I remember that the overflow of my heart towards her memory required expression, and I taught myself a strange kind of manuscript, by copying the letters of the alphabet. I bought six cents' worth of paper and a tallow candle at the store, which I used to light surreptitiously when I had been put to bed nights, and, sitting up in my little night-gown, I busied myself with writing my remembrances of her. I could not, for the world, have asked my mother to let me have a candle in my bed-room after eight o'clock. I would have died sooner than to explain why I wanted it. My purchase of paper and candle was my first act of independent manliness. The money, I reflected, was mine, because I earned it myself, and the paper was mine, and the candle was mine, so that I was not using my father's property in an unwarrantable manner, and thus I gave myself up to my inspirations. I wrote my remembrances of her, as she stood among the daisies and the golden lilies. I wrote down her little words of wisdom and grave advice, in the queerest manuscript that ever puzzled a wise man of the East. If one imagines that all this was spelt phonetically, and not at all in the unspeakable and astonishing way in which the English language is conventionally spelt, one may truly imagine that it was something rather peculiar in the way of literature. But the heart-comfort, the utter abandonment of soul that went into it, is something that only those can imagine who have tried the like and found the relief of it. My little heart was like the Caspian sea, or some other sea which I read about, which had found a secret channel by which its waters could pass off under ground. When I had finished, every evening, I used to extinguish my candle, and put it and my manuscript inside of the straw bed on which I slept, which had a long pocket hole in the centre, secured by buttons, for the purpose of stirring the straw. Over this I slept in conscious security, every night; sometimes with blissful dreams of going to brighter meadows, when I saw my Daisy playing with whole troops of beautiful children, fair as water lilies on the shore of a blue lake. Thus, while I seemed to be like any other boy, thinking of nothing but my sled, and my bat and ball, and my mittens, I began to have a little withdrawing room of my own; another land in which I could walk and take a kind of delight that nothing visible gave me. But one day my oldest sister, in making the bed, with domestic thoroughness, disemboweled my whole store of manuscripts and the half consumed fragment of my candle.

There is no poetry in housewifery, and my sister at once took a housewifely view of the proceeding—

"Well, now! is there any end to the conjurations of boys?" she said. "He might have set the house on fire and burned us all alive, in our beds!"

Reader, this is quite possible, as I used to perform my literary labors sitting up in bed, with the candle standing on a narrow ledge on the side of the bedstead.

Forthwith the whole of my performance was lodged in my mother's hands—I was luckily at school.

"Now, girls," said my mother, "keep quiet about this; above all, don't say a word to the boy. I will speak to him."

Accordingly, that night after I had gone up to bed, my mother came into my room and, when she had seen me in bed, she sat down by me and told me the whole discovery. I hid my head under the bed clothes, and felt a sort of burning shame and mortification that was inexpressible; but she had a good store of that mother's wit and wisdom by which I was to be comforted. At last she succeeded in drawing both the bed clothes from my face and the veil from my heart, and I told her all my little story.

"Dear boy," she said, "you must learn to write, and you need not buy candles, you shall sit by me evenings and I will teach you; it was very nice of you to practise all alone; but it will be a great deal easier to let me teach you the writing letters."

Now I had begun the usual course of writing copies in school. In those days it was deemed necessary to commence by teaching what was called *coarse hand;* and I had filled many dreary pages with m's and n's of a gigantic size; but it never had yet occurred to me that the writing of these copies was to bear any sort of relation to the expression of thoughts and emotions within me that were clamoring for a vent, while my rude copies of printed letters did bear to my mind this adaptation. But now my mother made me sit by her evenings, with a slate and pencil, and, under her care, I made a cross-cut into the fields of practical handwriting, and was also saved the dangers of going off into a morbid habit of feeling, which might easily have arisen from my solitary reveries.

"Dear," she said to my father, "I told you this one was to be our brightest. He will make a writer yet," and she showed him my manuscript.

"You must look after him, Mother," said my father, as he always said, when there arose any exigency about the children, that required delicate handling.

My mother was one of that class of women whose power on earth seems to be only the greater for being a spiritual and invisible one. The control of such women over men is like that of the soul over the body. The body is visible, forceful, obtrusive, self-asserting. The soul invisible, sensitive, yet with a subtle and vital power which constantly gains control and holds every inch that it gains.

My father was naturally impetuous, though magnanimous, hasty tempered and imperious, though conscientious; my mother united the most exquisite sensibility with the deepest calm—calm resulting from habitual communion with the highest and purest source of all rest—the peace that passeth all understanding. Gradually, by this spiritual force, this quietude of soul, she became his leader and guide. He held her hand and looked up to her with an implicit trustfulness that increased with every year.

"Where's your mother?" was always the fond inquiry when he entered the house, after having been off on one of his long preaching tours or clerical counsels. At all hours he would burst from his study with fragments of the sermon or letter he was writing, to read to her and receive her suggestions and criticisms. With her he discussed the plans of his discourses, and at her dictation changed, improved, altered and added; and under the brooding influence of her mind, new and finer traits of tenderness and spirituality pervaded his character and his teachings. In fact, my father once said to me, "She made me by her influence."

In these days, we sometimes hear women, who have reared large families on small means, spoken of as victims who had suffered unheard of oppressions. There is a growing materialism that refuses to believe that there can be happiness without the ease and facilities and luxuries of wealth.

But my father and mother, though living on a narrow income, were never really poor. The chief evil of poverty is the crushing of ideality out of life—the taking away its poetry and substituting hard prose;—and this with them was impossible. My father loved the work he did, as the artist loves his painting and the sculptor his chisel. A man needs less money when he is doing only what he loves to do—what, in fact, he *must* do,—pay or no pay. St. Paul said, "A necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is me, if I preach not the gospel." Preaching the gospel was his irrepressible instinct, a necessity of his being. My mother, from her deep spiritual nature, was one soul with my father in his life-work. With the moral organization of a prophetess, she stood nearer to heaven than he, and looking in, told him what she saw, and he, holding her hand, felt the thrill of celestial electricity. With such women, life has no prose; their eyes see all things in the light of heaven, and flowers of paradise spring up in paths that, to unanointed eyes, seem only paths of toil. I never felt, from anything I saw at home, from any word or action of my mother's, that we were poor, in the sense that poverty was an evil. I was reminded, to be sure, that we were poor in a sense that required constant carefulness, watchfulness over little things, energetic habits, and vigorous industry and self-helpfulness. But we were never poor in any sense that restricted hospitality or made it a burden. In those days, a minister's house was always the home for all the ministers and their families, whenever an exigency required of them to travel, and the spare room of our house never wanted guests of longer or shorter continuance. But the atmosphere of the house was such as always made guests welcome. Three or four times a year, the annual clerical gatherings of the church filled our house to overflowing and necessitated an abundant provision and great activity of preparation on the part of the women of our family. Yet I never heard an expression of impatience or a suggestion that made me suppose they felt themselves unduly burdened. My mother's cheerful face was a welcome and a benediction at all times, and guests found it good to be with her.

In the midst of our large family, of different ages, of vigorous growth, of great individuality and forcefulness of expression, my mother's was the administrative power. My father habitually referred everything to her, and leaned on her advice with a childlike dependence. She read the character of each, she mediated between opposing natures· she translated the dialect of different sorts of spirits, to each other. In a family of young children, there is a chance for every sort and variety of natures; and for natures whose modes of feeling are as foreign to each other, as those of the French and the English. It needs a common interpreter, who understands every dialect of the soul, thus to translate differences of individuality into a common language of love.

It has often seemed to me a fair question, on a review of the way my mother ruled in our family, whether the politics of the ideal state in a millennial community, should not be one equally pervaded by mother-influences.

The woman question of our day, as I understand it, is this. —Shall MOTHERHOOD ever be felt in the public administration of the affairs of state? The state is nothing more nor less than a collection of families, and what would be good or bad for the individual family, would be good or bad for the state.

Such as our family would have been, ruled only by my father, without my mother, such the political state is, and has been; there have been in it "conscript fathers," but no "conscript mothers;" yet is not a mother's influence needed in acts that relate to the interests of collected families as much as in individual ones?

The state, at this very day, needs an influence like what I remember our mother's to have been, in our great, vigorous, growing family,—an influence quiet, calm, warming, purifying, uniting—it needs a womanly economy and thrift in husbanding and applying its material resources—it needs a divining power, by which different sections and different races can be interpreted to each other, and blended together in love—it needs an educating power, by which its immature children may be trained in virtue—it needs a loving and redeeming power, by which its erring and criminal children may be borne with, purified, and led back to virtue.

Yet, while I thus muse, I remember that such women as my mother are those to whom in an especial manner all noise and publicity and unrestful conflict are peculiarly distasteful. My mother had that delicacy of fibre that made any kind of public exercise of her powers an impossibility. It is not peculiarly a feminine characteristic, but belongs equally to many men of the finest natures. It is characteristic of the poets and philosophers of life. It is ascribed by the sacred writers to Jesus of Nazareth, in whom an aversion for publicity and a longing for stillness and retirement are specially indicated by many touching incidents. Jesus preferred to form around him a family of disciples and to act on the world through them, and it is remarkable that he left no writings directly addressed to the world by himself, but only by those whom he inspired.

Women of this brooding, quiet, deeply spiritual nature, while they cannot attend caucuses, or pull political wires or mingle in the strife of political life, are yet the most needed force to be for the good of the State. I am persuaded that *it is not till this class of women feel as vital and personal responsibility for the good of the State, as they have hitherto felt for that of the family, that we shall gain the final elements of a perfect society.* The laws of Rome, so said the graceful myth, were dictated to Numa Pompilius, by the nymph, Egeria. No mortal eye saw her. She was not in the forum, or the senate. She did not strive, nor cry, nor lift up her voice in the street, but she made the laws by which Rome ruled the world. Let us hope in a coming day that not Egeria, but Mary, the mother of Jesus, the great archetype of the christian motherhood, shall be felt through all the laws and institutions of society. That Mary, who kept all things and pondered them in her heart—the silent poet, the prophetess, the one confidential friend of Jesus, sweet and retired as evening dew, yet strong to go forth with Christ against the cruel and vulgar mob, and to stand unfainting by the cross where He suffered!

From the time that my mother discovered my store of manuscripts, she came into new and more intimate relation with me. She took me from the district school, and kept me constantly with herself, teaching me in the intervals of domestic avocations.

I was what is called a mother's-boy, as she taught me to render her all sorts of household services, such as are usually performed by girls. My two older sisters, about this time, left us, to establish a seminary in the neighborhood, and the sister nearest my age went to study under their care, so that my mother said, playfully, she had no resource but to make a girl of me. This association with a womanly nature, and this discipline in womanly ways, I hold to have been an invaluable part of my early training. There is no earthly reason which requires a man, in order to be manly, to be unhandy and clumsy in regard to the minutiæ of domestic life; and there are quantities of occasions occurring in the life of every man, in which he will have occasion to be grateful to his mother, if, like mine, she trains him in woman's arts and the secrets of making domestic life agreeable.

But it is not merely in this respect that I felt the value of my early companionship with my mother. The power of such women over our sex is essentially the service rendered us in forming our ideal, and it was by my mother's influence that the ideal guardian, the "shadow wife," was formed, that guided me through my youth.

She wisely laid hold of the little idyl of my childhood, as something which gave her the key to my nature, and opened before me the hope in my manhood of such a friend as my little Daisy had been to my childhood. This wife of the future she often spoke of as a motive. I was to make myself worthy of her. For her sake I was to be strong, to be efficient, to be manly and true, and above all pure in thought and imagination and in word.

The cold mountain air and simple habits of New England country life are largely a preventive of open immorality; but there is another temptation which besets the boy, against which the womanly ideal is the best shield—the temptation to vulgarity and obscenity.

It was to my mother's care and teaching I owe it, that there always seemed to be a lady at my elbow, when stories were told such as a pure woman would blush to hear. It was owing to her, that a great deal of what I supposed to be classical literature both in Greek and Latin and in English was to me and is to me to this day simply repulsive and disgusting. I remember that one time when I was in my twelfth or thirteenth year, one of Satan's agents put into my hand one of those stories that are written with an express purpose of demoralizing the young—stories that are sent creeping like vipers and rattle-snakes stealthily and secretly among inexperienced and unguarded boys hiding in secret corners, gliding under their pillows and filling their veins with the fever poison of impurity. How many boys in the most critical period of life are forever ruined, in body and soul, by the silent secret gliding among them of these nests of impure serpents, unless they have a mother, wise, watchful, and never sleeping, with whom they are in habits of unreserved intimacy and communion!

I remember that when my mother took from me this book, it was with an expression of fear and horror which made a deep impression on me. Then she sat by me that night, when the shadows were deepening, and told me how the reading of such books, or the letting of such ideas into my mind, would make me unworthy of the wife she hoped some day I would win. With a voice of solemn awe she spoke of the holy mystery of marriage as something so sacred, that all my life's happiness depended on keeping it pure, and surrounding it only with the holiest thoughts.

It was more the thrill of her sympathies, the noble poetry of her nature inspiring mine, than anything she said, that acted upon me and stimulated me to keep my mind and memory pure. In the closeness of my communion with her I seemed to see through her eyes and feel through her nerves, so that at last a passage in a book or a sentiment uttered always suggested the idea of what she would think of it.

In our days we have heard much said of the importance of training women to be wives. Is there not something to be said on the importance of training men to be husbands? Is the wide latitude of thought and reading and expression which has been accorded as a matter of course to the boy and the young man, the conventionally allowed familiarity with coarseness and indelicacy, a fair preparation to enable him to be the intimate companion of a pure woman? For how many ages has it been the doctrine that man and woman were to meet in marriage, the one crystal-pure, the other foul with the permitted garbage of all sorts of uncleansed literature and license?

If the man is to be the head of the woman, even as Christ is the head of the Church, should he not be her equal, at least, in purity?

My shadow-wife grew up by my side under my mother's creative touch. It was for her I studied, for her I should toil. The thought of providing for her took the sordid element out of economy and made it unselfish. She was to be to me adviser, friend, inspirer, charmer. She was to be my companion, not alone in one faculty, but through all the range of my being—there should be nothing wherein she and I could not by appreciative sympathy commune together. As I thought of her, she seemed higher than I. I must love up and not down, I said. She must stand on a height and I must climb to her—she must be a princess worthy of many toils and many labors. Gradually she became to me a controlling power.

The thought of what she would think, closed for me many a book that I felt she and I could not read together—her fair image barred the way to many a door and avenue, which if a young man enters, he must leave his good angel behind,—for her sake I abjured intimacies that I felt she could not approve, and it was my ambition to keep the inner temple of my heart and thoughts so pure, that it might be a worthy resting-place for her at last.

CHAPTER V.

I START FOR COLLEGE AND MY UNCLE JACOB ADVISES ME.

THE time came at last when the sacred habit of intimacy with my mother was broken, and I was to leave her for college.

It was the more painful to her, as only a year before, my father had died, leaving her more than ever dependent on the society of her children.

My father died as he had lived, rejoicing in his work and feeling that if he had a hundred lives to live, he would devote them to the same object for which he had spent that one—the preaching of the Gospel. He left to my mother the homestead and a small farm, which was under the care of one of my brothers, so that the event of his death made no change in our family home center, and I was to go to college and fulfill the hope of his heart and the desire of my mother's life, in consecrating myself to the work of the Christian ministry.

My father and mother had always kept sacredly a little fund laid by for the education of their children; it was the result of many small savings and self-denials—but self-denials so cheerfully and hopefully encountered that they had almost changed their nature and become preferences. The family fund for this purpose had been used in turn by two of my older brothers, who, as soon as they gained an independent foothold in life, appropriated each his first earnings to replacing this sum for the use of the next.

It was not, however, a fund large enough to dispense with the need of a strict economy, and a supplemental self-helpfulness on our part.

The terms in some of our New England colleges are thoughtfully arranged so that the students can teach for three of the winter months, and the resources thus gained help out their college expenses. Thus at the same time they educate themselves and help to educate others, and they study with the maturity of mind and the appreciation of the value of what they are gaining, resulting from a habit of measuring themselves with the actual needs of life.

The time when the boy goes to college is the time when he feels manhood to begin. He is no longer a boy, but an unfledged, undeveloped man—a creature, half of the past and half of the future. Yet every one gives him a good word or a congratulatory shake of the hand on his entrance to this new plateau of life. It is a time when advice is plenty as blackberries in August, and often held quite as cheap—but nevertheless a young fellow may as well look at what his elders tell him at this time, and see what he can make of it.

As I was "our minister's son," all the village thought it had something to do with my going. "Hallo, Harry, so you've got into college! Think you'll be as smart a man as your dad?" said one. "Wa-al, so I hear you're going to college. Stick to it now. I could a made suthin ef I'd a had larnin at your age," said old Jerry Smith, who rung the meeting-house bell, sawed wood, and took care of miscellaneous gardens for sundry widows in the vicinity.

But the sayings that struck me as most to the purpose came from my Uncle Jacob.

Uncle Jacob was my mother's brother, and the doctor not only of our village, but of all the neighborhood for ten miles round. He was a man celebrated for medical knowledge through the State, and known by his articles in medical journals far beyond. He might have easily commanded a wider and more lucrative sphere of practice by going to any of the large towns and cities, but Uncle Jacob was a philosopher and preferred to live in a small quiet way in a place whose scenery suited him, and where he could act precisely as he felt disposed, and carry out all his little humors and pet ideas without rubbing against conventionalities.

He had a secret adoration for my mother, whom he regarded as the top and crown of all womanhood, and he also enjoyed the society of my father, using him as a sort of whetstone to sharpen his wits on. Uncle Jacob was a church member in good standing, but in the matter of belief he was somewhat like a high-mettled horse in a pasture,—he enjoyed once in a while having a free argumentative race with my father all round the theological lot. Away he would go in full career, dodging definitions, doubling and turning with elastic dexterity, and sometimes ended by leaping over all the fences, with most astounding assertions, after which he would calm down, and gradually suffer the theological saddle and bridle to be put on him and go on with edifying paces, apparently much refreshed by his metaphysical capers.

Uncle Jacob was reported to have a wonderful skill in the healing craft. He compounded certain pills which were stated to have most wonderful effects. He was accustomed to exact that, in order fully to develop their medical properties, they should be taken after a daily bath, and be followed immediately by a brisk walk of a specific duration in the open air. The steady use of these pills had been known to make wonderful changes in the cases of confirmed invalids, a fact which Uncle Jacob used to notice with a peculiar twinkle in the corner of his eye. It was sometimes whispered that the composition of them was neither more nor less than simple white sugar with a flavor of some harmless essence, but upon this subject my Uncle Jacob was impenetrable. He used to say, with the afore-mentioned waggish twinkle, that their preparation was his secret.

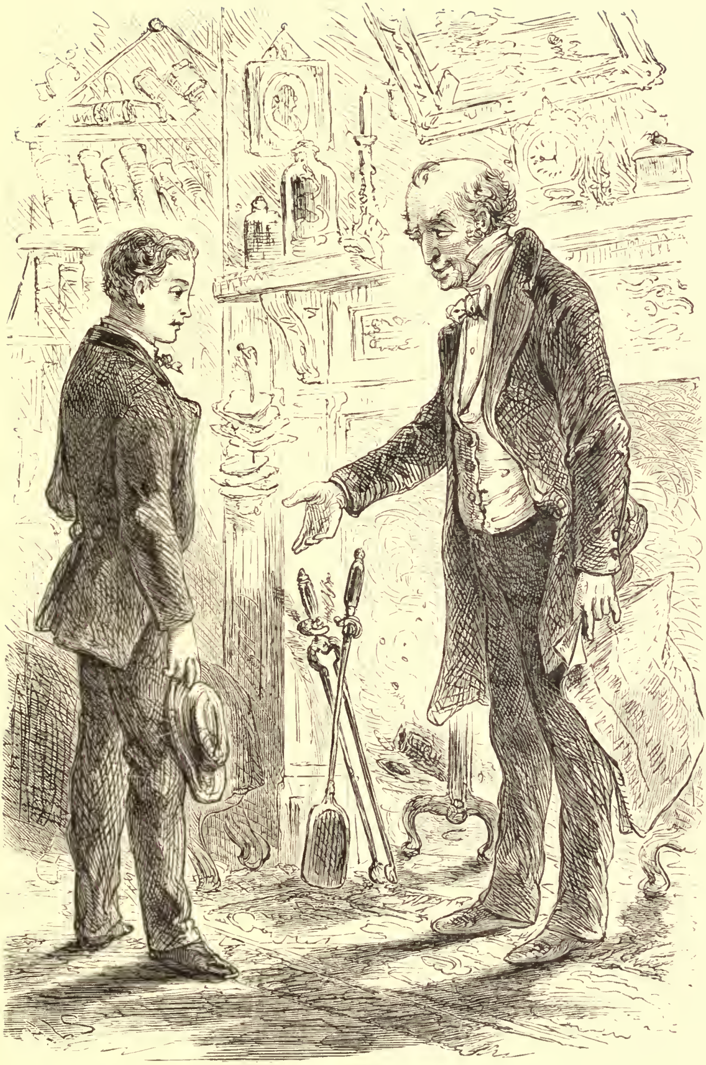
Uncle Jacob had always had a special favor for me, shown after his own odd and original manner. He would take me in his chaise with him when driving about his business, and keep my mind on a perpetual stretch with his odd questions and droll, suggestive remarks or stories. There was a shrewd keen quality to all that he said, that stimulated like a mental tonic, and none the less so for a stinging flavor of sarcasm and cynicism, that stirred up and provoked one's self-esteem. Yet as Uncle Jacob was companionable and loved a listener, I think he was none the less agreeable to me for this slight touch of his claws. One likes to find power of any kind—and he who shows that he can both scratch and bite effectively, if he holds his talons in sheath, comes in time to be regarded as a sort of benefactor for his forbearance: and so, though I got many a shrewd mental nip and gripe from my Uncle Jacob, I gave on the whole more heed to his opinion than that of anybody else that I knew.

From the time that I had been detected with my self-invented manuscript, up to the period of my going to college, the expression of my thoughts by writing had always been a passion with me, and from year to year my mind had been busy with its own creations, which it was a solace and amusement for me to record.

Of course there was ever so much crabbed manuscript, and no less confused, immature thought. I wrote poems, essays, stories, tragedies, and comedies. I demonstrated the immortality of the soul. I sustained the future immortality of the souls of animals. I wrote sonnets and odes, in whole or in part on almost everything that could be mentioned in creation.

My mother advised me to make Uncle Jacob my literary mentor, and the best of my productions were laid under his eye.

"Poor trash!" he was wont to say, with his usual kindly twinkle. "But there must be poor trash in the beginning. We must all eat our peck of dirt, and learn to write sense by writing nonsense." Then he would pick out here and there a line or expression which he assured me was "*not bad*." Now and then he condescended to tell me that for a boy of my age, so and so was actually hopeful, and that I



UNCLE JACOB'S ADVICE.

"*So you are going to college, boy! Well, away with you; there's no use advising you; you'll do as all the rest do. In one year you'll know more than your father, your mother, or I, or all your college officers.*"

should make something one of these days, which was to me more encouragement than much more decided praise from any other quarter.

We all notice that he who is reluctant to praise, whose commendation is scarce and hard-earned, is he for whose good word everybody is fighting; he comes at last to be the judge in the race. After all, the fact which Uncle Jacob could not disguise, that he had a certain good opinion of me, in spite of his sharp criticisms and scant praises, made him the one whose dicta on every subject were the most important to me.

I went to him in all the glow of satisfaction and the tremble of self-importance that a boy feels who is taking the first step into the land of manhood.

I have the image of him now, as he stood with his back to the fire, and the newspaper in his hand, giving me his last counsels. A little wiry, keen-looking man, with a blue, hawk-like eye, a hooked nose, a high forehead, shadowed with grizzled hair, and a cris-cross of deeply lined wrinkles in his face.

"So you are going to college, boy! Well, away with you; there 's no use advising you; you 'll do as all the rest do. In one year you'll know more than your father, your mother, or I, or all your college officers—in fact, than the Lord himself. You'll have doubts about the Bible, and think you could have made a better one. You 'll think that if the Lord had consulted you he could have laid the foundations of the earth better, and arranged the course of nature to more purpose. In short, you'll be a god, knowing good and evil, and running all over creation measuring everybody and everything in your pint cup. There'll be no living with you. But you'll get over it,—it's only the febrile stage of knowledge. But if you have a good constitution, you'll come through with it."

I humbly suggested to him that I should try to keep clear of the febrile stage; that forewarned was forearmed.

"Oh, tut! tut! you must go through your fooleries. These are the regular diseases, the chicken-pox, measles, and mumps of young manhood; you 'll have them all. We only pray that you may have them light, and not break your constitution for all your life through, by them. For instance, you'll fall in love with some baby-faced young thing, with pink cheeks and long eyelashes, and goodness only knows what abominations of sonnets you'll be guilty of. That isn't fatal, however. Only don't get engaged. Take it as the chicken-pox—keep your pores open, and don't get cold, and it'll pass off and leave you none the worse."

"And she!" said I, indignantly. "You talk as if it was no matter what became of her—"

"What, the baby? Oh, she'll outgrow it, too. The fact is, soberly and seriously, Harry, marriage is the thing that makes or mars a man; it's the gate through which he goes up or down, and you shouldn't pledge yourself to it till you come to your full senses. Look at your mother, boy; see what a woman may be; see what she was to your father, what she is to me, to you, to every one that knows her. Such a woman, to speak reverently, is a pearl of great price; a man might well sell all he had to buy her. But it isn't that kind of woman that flirts with college boys. You don't pick up such pearls every day."

Of course I declared that nothing was further from my thoughts than anything of that nature.

"The fact is, Harry, you can't afford fooleries," said my uncle. "You have your own way to make, and nothing to make it with but your own head and hands, and you must begin now to count the cost of everything. You have a healthy, sound body; see that you take care of it. God gives you a body but once. He don't take care of it for you, and whatever of it you lose, you lose for good. Many a chap goes into college fresh as you are, and comes out with weak eyes and crooked back, yellow complexion and dyspeptic stomach. He has only himself to thank for it. When you get to college they'll want you to smoke, and you'll want to, just for idleness and good fellowship. Now, before you begin, just calculate what it'll cost you. You can't get a good cigar under ten cents, and your smoker wants three a day, at the least. There go thirty cents a day, two dollars and ten cents a week, or a hundred and nine dollars and twenty cents a year. Take the next ten years at that rate, and you can invest over a thousand dollars in tobacco smoke. That thousand dollars, invested in a savings bank, would give a permanent income of sixty dollars a year,—a handy thing, as you'll find, just as you are beginning life. Now, I know you think all this is prosy; you are amazingly given to figures of rhetoric, but, after all, you've got to get on in a world where things go by the rules of arithmetic."

"Well, uncle," I said, a little nettled, "I pledge you my word that I won't smoke or drink. I never have done either, and I don't know why I should."

"Good for you! your hand on that, my boy. You don't need either tobacco or spirits any more than you need water in your shoes. There's no danger in doing without them, and great danger in doing with them; so let's look on that as settled.

"Now, as to the rest. You have a faculty for stringing words together, and a hankering after it, that may make or spoil you. Many a fellow comes to naught because he can string pretty phrases and turn a good line of poetry. He gets the notion that he's to be a poet, or orator, or genius of some sort, and neglects study. Now, Harry, remember that an empty bag can't stand upright; and that if you are ever to be a writer you must have something to say, and that you've got to dig for knowledge as for hidden treasure. A genius *for hard work* is the best kind of genius. Look at great writers, and see how many had it. What a student Milton was, and Goethe! Great fellows, those!—like trees that grow out in a pasture lot, with branches all round. Composition is the flowering out of a man's mind. When he has made growth, all studies and all learning, all that makes woody fibre, go into it. Now, study books; observe nature; practice. If you make a good firm mental growth, I hope to see some blossoms and fruits from it one of these days. So go your ways, and God bless you!"

The last words were said as Uncle Jacob slipped into my hand an envelope, containing a sum of money. "You'll need it," he said, "to furnish your room; and hark'e! if you get into any troubles that you don't want to burden your mother with, come to me."

There was warmth in the grip with which these last words were said, and a sort of misty moisture came over his keen blue eye,—little signs which meant as much from his shrewd and reticent nature as a caress or an expression of tenderness might from another.

My mother's last words, after hours of talk over the evening fire, were these: "I want you to be a *good* man. A great many have tried to be great men, and failed; but nobody ever sincerely tried to be a *good* man, and failed."

I suppose it is about the happiest era in a young fellow's life, when he goes to college for the first time.

The future is all a land of blue distant mists and shadows, radiant as an Italian landscape. The boundaries between the possible and the not possible are so charmingly vague! There is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow forever waiting for each new comer. Generations have not exhausted it!

De Balzac said, of writing his novels, that the dreaming out of them was altogether the best of it. "To imagine," he said, "is to smoke enchanted cigarettes; to bring out one's imaginations into words,—that is *work!*"

The same may be said of the romance of one's life. The dream-life is beautiful, but the rendering into reality quite another thing.

I believe every boy who has a good father and mother, goes to college meaning, in a general way, to be a good fellow. He will not disappoint them.—No! a thousand times, no! In the main, he will be a good boy,—not that he is going *quite* to walk according to the counsels of his elders. He is not going to fall over any precipices—not he—but he is going to walk warily and advisedly along the edge of them, and take a dispassionate survey of the prospect, and gather a few botanical specimens here and there. It might be dangerous for a less steady head than his; but he understands himself, and with regard to all things he says, "We shall see." The world is full of possibilities and open questions. Up sail, and away; let us test them!

As I scaled the mountains and descended the valleys on my way to college, I thought over all that my mother and Uncle Jacob had said to me, and had my own opinion of it.

Of course I was not the person to err in the ways he had suggested. I was not to be the dupe of a boy and girl flirtation. My standard of manhood was too exalted, I reflected, and I thought with complacency how little Uncle Jacob knew of me.

To be sure, it is a curious kind of a thought to a young man, that somewhere in this world, unknown to him, and as yet unknowing him, lives the woman that is to be his earthly fate,—to affect, for good or evil, his destiny.

We have all read the pretty story about the Princess of China and the young Prince of Tartary, whom a fairy and genius in a freak of caprice showed to each other in an enchanted sleep, and then whisked away again, leaving them to years of vain pursuit and wanderings. Such is the ideal image of *somebody,* who must exist *somewhere,* and is to be found *sometime,* and when found, is to be ours.

"Uncle Jacob is all right in the main," I said; "but if I should meet the true woman even in my college days, why that, indeed, would be quite another thing."

CHAPTER VI.

MY DREAM-WIFE.

ALL things prospered with me in my college life. I had a sunny room commanding a fine prospect, and Uncle Jacob's parting liberality enabled me to furnish it commodiously.

I bought the furniture of a departing senior at a reduced price, and felt quite the spirit of a householder in my possessions. I was well prepared on my studies and did not find my tasks difficult.

My stock of interior garnishment included several French lithographs, for the most part of female heads, looking up, with very dark bright eyes, or looking down, with very long dark eyelashes.

These heads of dream-women are, after all, not to be laughed at; they show the yearning for womanly influences and womanly society which follows the young man in his enforced monastic seclusion from all family life and family atmosphere. These little fanciful French lithographs, generally, are chosen for quite other than artistic reasons. If we search into it we shall find that one is selected because it is like sister "Nell," and another puts one in mind of "Bessie," and then again, there is another "like a girl I used to know." Now and then one of them has such a piquant, provoking air of individuality, that one is sure it must have been sketched from nature. Some teasing, coaxing, "don't-care-what-you-think" sort of a sprite, must have wreathed poppies and blue corn-flowers just so in her hair, and looked gay defiance at the artist who drew it. There was just such a saucy, spirited gipsy over my mantel-piece, who seemed to defy me to find her if I searched the world over—with whom I held sometimes airy colloquies—not in the least was she like my dream-wife, but I liked her for all that, and thought I would "give something" to know what she would have to say to me, just for the curiosity of the thing.

The college was in a little village, and there was no particular amity between the townspeople and the students. I believe it is the understanding in such cases, that college students are to be regarded and treated as a tribe of Bedouin Arabs, whose hand is against every man, and they in their turn are not backward to make good the character. Public opinion shuts them up together—they are a state within a state—with a public sentiment, laws, manners, and modes of thinking of their own. It is a state, too, without women. When we think of this, and remember that all this experience is gone through in the most gaseous and yeasty period of human existence, we no longer wonder that there are college rows and scrapes, that all sorts of grotesque capers become hereditary and traditional; that an apple-cart occasionally appears on top of one of the steeples, that cannon balls are rolled surreptitiously down the college stairs, and that tutors' doors are mysteriously found locked at recitation hours. One simply wonders that the roof is not blown off, and the windows out, by the combined excitability of so many fermenting natures.

There is a tendency now in society to open the college course equally to women—to continue through college life that interaction of the comparative influence of the sexes which is begun in the family.

To a certain extent this experiment has been always favorably tried in the New England rural Academies, where young men are fitted for college in the same classes and studies with women.

In these time-honored institutions, young women have kept step with young men in the daily pursuit of science, not only without disorder or unseemly scandal, but with manifestly more quietness and refinement of manner than obtains in institutions where female association ceases altogether. The presence of a couple of dozen of well-bred ladies in the lecture and recitation rooms of a college would probably be a preventive of many of the unseemly and clumsy jokes wherewith it has been customary to diversify the paths of science, to the affliction of the souls of professors.

But for us boys, there was no gospel of womanhood except what was to be got from the letters of mothers and sisters, and such imperfect and flitting acquaintance as we could pick up in the streets with the girls of the village. Now though there might be profit, could young men and women see each other daily under the responsibility of serious business, keeping step with one another in higher studies, yet it by no means follows that this kind of flitting glimpse-like acquaintance, formed merely in the exchange of a few outside superficialities, can have any particularly good effect. No element of true worthy friendship, of sober appreciation, or manly or womanly good sense, generally enters into these girl-and-boy flirtations, which are the only substitute for family association during the barren years of student life. The students were not often invited into families, and those who gained a character as ladies' men were not favorably looked upon by our elders. Now and then by rare and exceptional good luck a college student is made at home in some good family, where there is a nice kind mother and the wholesome atmosphere of human life; or, he forms the acquaintance of some woman, older and wiser than himself, who can talk with him on all the multitude of topics his college studies suggest. But such cases are only exceptions. In general there is no choice between flirtation and monastic isolation.

For my part, I posed myself on the exemplary platform, and remembering my uncle Jacob's advice, contemplated life with the grim rigidity of a philosopher. I was going to have no trifling, and surveyed the girls at church, on Sunday, with a distant and severe air—as gay creatures of an hour, who could hold no place in my serious meditations. Plato or Aristotle, in person, could not have contemplated life and society from a more serene height of composure. I was favorably known by my teachers, and held rank at the head of my class, and was stigmatized as a "dig," by frisky young gentlemen who enjoyed rolling cannon balls down stairs—taking the tongue out of the chapel bell—greasing the seats, and other thread-bare college jokes, which they had not genius enough to vary, so as to give them a spice of originality.

But one bright June Sunday—just one of those days that seem made to put all one's philosophy into confusion, when apple-blossoms were bursting their pink shells, and robins singing, and leaves twittering and talking to each other in undertones, there came to me a great revelation.

How innocently I brushed my hair and tied my neck tie, on that fateful morning, contemplating my growing moustache and whiskers hopefully in the small square of looking-glass which served for me these useful purposes of self-knowledge. I looked at my lineaments as those of a free young junior, without fear and without anxiety, without even an incipient inquiry what anybody else would think of them—least of all any woman—and marched forth obediently and took my wonted seat in that gallery of the village church which was assigned to the college students of Congregational descent; where, like so many sheep in a pen, we joined in the services of the common sheep-fold.

I suppose there is moral profit even in the decent self-denial of such weekly recurring religious exercises. To be forced to a certain period of silence, order, quiet, and to have therein a possibility and a suggestion of communion with a Higher Power, and an out-look into immortality, is something not to be undervalued in education, and justifies the stringency with which our New England colleges preserve and guard this part of their régime.

But it was to be confessed in our case, that the number who really seemed to have any spiritual participation or sympathy in the great purposes of the exercises, was not a majority. A general, dull decency of demeanor was the most frequent attainment, and such small recreations were in vogue as could be pursued without drawing the attention of the monitors. There was some telegraphy of eyes between the girls of the village and some of the more society-loving fellows, who had cultivated intimacies in that quarter; there were some novels, stealthily introduced and artfully concealed and read by the owner, while his head, resting on the seat before him, seemed bowed in devotion; and some artistic exercises in sketching caricatures on the part of others. For my own part, having been trained religiously, I gave strict outward and decorous attention; but the fact was that my mind generally sailed off on some cloud of fancy, and wandered through dream-land, so that not a word of anything present reached my ear. This habit of reverie and castle-building, repressed all the week by the severe necessity of definite tasks, came upon me Sundays as Bunyan describes the hot, sleepy atmosphere of the enchanted ground

Our pastor was a good man, who wrote a kind of smooth, elegant, unexceptionable English; whose measured cadences and easy flow, were, to use the scripture language, as a "very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play sweetly upon an instrument." I heard him as one hears murmurs and voices through one's sleep, while my spirit went everywhere under the sun. I traveled in foreign lands, I saw pictures, cathedrals; I had thrilling adventures and hair-breadth escapes; formed strange and exciting acquaintances; in short, was the hero of a romance, whose scenes changed as airily and easily as the sunset clouds of evening. So really and so vividly did this supposititious life excite me that I have actually found myself with tears in my eyes through the pathos of these unsubstantial visions.

It was in one of the lulling pauses of such a romance, while I yet heard the voice of our good pastor proving that "selfishness was the essence of moral evil," that I lifted up my eyes, and became for the first time conscious of a new face, in the third pew of the broad aisle below me. It was a new one—one that certainly had never been there before, and was altogether just the face to enter into the most ethereal perceptions of my visionary life. I started with a sort of awakening thrill, such, perhaps, as Adam had when he woke from his sleep and saw his Eve. There, to be sure, was the face of my dream-wife, incarnate and visible! That face, so refined, so spiritual, so pure! a baptized, Christianized Greek face! A cross between Venus and the Virgin Mary! The outlines were purely, severely classical, such as I have since seen in the Psyche of the Naples gallery; but the large, tremulous, pathetic eyes redeemed them from statuesque coldness. They were eyes that *thought*, that looked deep into life, death, and eternity—so I said to myself as I gazed down on her, and held my breath with a kind of religious awe. The vision was all in white, as such visions must be, and the gauzy crape bonnet with its flowers upon her head, dissolved under my eyes into a sort of sacred aureole, such as surrounds the heads of saints. I saw her, and only her, through the remaining hour of church. I studied every movement. The radiant eyes were fixed upon the minister, and with an expression so sadly earnest that I blushed for my own wandering thoughts, and began to endeavor to turn my mind to the truths I was hearing told; but, after all, I thought more about her than the discourse. I saw her search the hymn-book for the hymn, and wished that I were down there to find it for her. I saw her standing up, and looking down at her hymns with the wonderful eyes veiled by long lashes, and singing—

"Call me away from earth and sense,
One sovereign word can draw me thence,
I would obey the voice divine,
And all inferior joys resign."

How miserably gross, and worldly, and unworthy I felt at that moment! How I longed for an ideal, superhuman spirituality,—something that should make me worthy to touch the hem of her garment!

When the blessing was pronounced, I hastened down and stood where I might see her as she passed out of church. I had not been alone in my discoveries: there had been dozens of others that saw the same star, and there were whisperings, and elbowings, and consultings, as a knot of juniors and seniors stationed themselves as I had done, to see her pass out.

As she passed by she raised her eyes slowly, and as it were by accident, and they fell like a ray of sunlight on one of our number,—Jim Fellows—who immediately bowed. A slight pink flush rose in her cheeks as she gracefully returned the salutation, and passed on. Jim was instantly the great man of the hour; he knew her, it seems.

"It's Miss Ellery, of Portland. Have n't you heard of her?" he said, with an air of importance. "She's the great beauty of Portland. They call her the 'little divinity.' Met her last summer, at Mount Desert," he added, with the comfortable air of a man in possession of the leading fact of the hour—the fact about which everybody else is inquiring.

I walked home behind her in a kind of trance, disdaining to join in what I thought the very flippant and unworthy comments of the boys. I saw the last wave of her white garments as she passed between the two evergreens in front of deacon Brown's square white house, which at that moment became to me a mysterious and glorified shrine; there the angel held her tabernacle.

At this moment I met Miss Dotha Brown, the deacon's eldest daughter, a rosy-cheeked, pleasant-faced girl, to whom I had been introduced the week before. Instantly she was clothed upon with a new interest in my eyes, and I saluted her with *empressement;* if not the rose, she at least was the clay that was imbibing the perfume of the rose; and I don't doubt that my delight at seeing her assumed the appearance of personal admiration. "What a charming Sunday," I said, with emphasis. "Perfectly charming," said Miss Brown, sympathetically.

"You have an interesting young friend staying with you, I observe," said I.

"Who, Miss Ellery? oh, yes. Oh! Mr. Henderson, she is the sweetest girl!" said Dotha, with effusion.

I did n't doubt it, and listened eagerly to her praises, and was grateful to Miss Brown for the warm invitation to "call" which followed. Miss Ellery was to make them a long visit, and she would be *so* happy to introduce me.

That evening Miss Ellery was a topic of excited discussion in our entry, and Jim Fellows plumed himself largely on his Mount Desert experiences, which he related in a way to produce the impression that he had been regarded with a favorable eye by the divinity.

I was in a state of silent indignation, at him, at all the rest of the boys, at everybody in general, being fully persuaded that they were utterly incapable of understanding or appreciating this wonderful creature.

"Hal, why don't you talk?" said one of them to me, when I had sat silent, pretending to read for a long time; "What do you think of her?"

"Oh, I'm no ladies' man, as you all know," I said, evasively, and actually pretended not to have remarked Miss Ellery except in a cursory manner.

Then followed a period of weeks and months, when that one image was never for a moment out of my thoughts. By a strange law of our being, a certain idea can accompany us everywhere, not stopping or interrupting the course of the thought, but going on in a sort of shadowy way with it, as an invisible presence.

The man or woman who cherishes an ideal is always liable to this accident, that the spiritual image often descends like a mantle, and invests some very ordinary person, who is, for the time being, transfigured,—"a woman clothed with the sun, and with the moon under her feet."

It is not what there is in the person, but what there is in *us*, that gives this passage in life its critical power. It would seem as if there were in some men, and some women, preparation for a grand interior illumination and passion, like that hoard of mystical gums and spices which the phenix was fabled to prepare for its funeral pile; all the aspiration and poetry and romance, the upheaval toward an infinite and eternal good, a divine purity and rest, may be enkindled by the touch of a very ordinary and earthly hand, and, burning itself out, leave only cold ashes of experience.

Miss Ellery was a well-bred young lady, of decorous and proper demeanor, of careful religious education, of no particular strength either of mind or emotion, good-tempered, and with an instinctive approbativeness that made her desirous to please every body, which created for her the reputation that Miss Brown expressed in calling her "a sweet girl." She was always most agreeable to those with whom she was thrown, and for the time being appeared to be, and was sincerely interested in them; but her mind was like a well-polished looking-glass, retaining not a trace of anything absent or distant.

She was gifted by nature with wonderful beauty, and beauty of that peculiar style that stirs the senses of the poetical and the ideal; her gentle approbativeness, and the graceful facility of her manner, were such as not at least to destroy the visions which her beauty created. In a quiet way she enjoyed being adored—made love to, but she never overstepped the bounds of strict propriety. She received me with graciousness, and I really think found something in my society which was agreeably stimulating to her. I was somewhat out of the common track of her adorers; my ardor and enthusiasm gave her a new emotion. I wrote poems to her, which she read with a graceful pensiveness and laid away among her trophies in her private writing-desk. I called her my star, my inspiration, my light, and she beamed down on me with a pensive purity. "Yes, she was delighted to have me read Tennyson to her," and many an hour when I should have been studying, I was lounging in the little front parlor of the Brown house, fancying myself Sir Galahad, and reading with emotion, how his "blade was strong, because his heart was pure;" and Miss Ellery murmured "How lovely!" and I was in paradise.

And then there came wonderful moonlight evenings—evenings when every leaf stirring had a penciled reproduction flickering in light and shade on the turf; and we walked together under arches of elm trees, and I talked and quoted poetry; and she listened and assented in the sweetest manner possible. All my hopes, my plans, my dreams, my speculations, my philosophies, came out to sun themselves under the magic of those lustrous eyes. Her replies and utterances were greatly in disproportion to mine; but I received them, and made much of them, as of old the priests of Delphi did with those of the inspired maiden. There must be deep meaning in it all, because she was a priestess; and I was not backward to supply it.

I have often endeavored to analyze the sources of the illusion cast over men by such characters as that of Miss Ellery. In their case the instinctive action of approbativeness assumes the semblance of human sympathy, and brings them for the time being into the life-sphere, and under the influence, of any person whom they wish to please, so that they with a temporary sincerity reflect back the ideas and feelings of others. There is just the same illusive sort of charm in this reflection of our own thoughts and emotions from another mind, as there is in the reflection of objects in a placid lake. There is no warmth and no reality to it; and yet, for the time being, it is often the most entrancing thing in the world, and gives back to you the glow of your own heart, the fervor of your imagination, and even every little flower of fancy, and twig of feeling, with a wonderful faithfulness of reproduction.

It is not real sympathy, because, like the image in the lake, it is only there when you are present; and when you are away, reflects with equal facility the next comer.

But men always have been, and to the end of time always will be, fascinated by such women, and will suppose this mere reflecting power of a highly polished surface to be the sympathetic response for which the heart longs.

So I had no doubt that Miss Ellery was a woman of all sorts of high literary tastes and moral heroisms, for there was nothing so high or so deep in the aspirations of poets or sages in my readings to her, that could not be reflected and glorified in those wonderful eyes.

Neither are such women hypocrites, as they are often called. What they give back to you is for the time being a sincere reflection, and if there is no depth to it, if it passes away with the passing hour, it is simply because their natures—smooth, shallow, and cold—have no deeper power of retention.

The fault lies in expecting more of a thing than there is in its nature—a fault we shall more or less all go on committing till the great curtain falls.

I wrote all about her to my mother; and received the usual cautionary maternal epistle, reminding me that I was yet far from that goal in life when I was warranted in asking any woman to be my wife; and suggesting that my taste might alter with maturity; warning me against premature commitments—in short, saying all that good, anxious mothers usually say to young juniors in college in similar circumstances.

In reply, I told my mother that I had found a woman worthy the devotion of a life—a woman who would be inspiration and motive and reward. I extolled her purity and saintliness. I told my mother that she was forming and leading me to all that was holy and noble. In short I meant to win her though the seven labors of Hercules were to be performed seven times over to reach her.

Now the fact is, my mother might have saved herself her anxiety. Miss Ellery was perfectly willing to be my guiding star, my inspiration, my light, within reasonable limits, while making a visit in an otherwise rather dull town.

She liked to be read to; she liked the consciousness of being incessantly admired, and would have made a very good image for some Church of the Perpetual Adoration; but after all, Miss Ellery was as incapable of forming an ineligible engagement of marriage with a poor college student, as the most sensible and collected of Walter Scott's heroines.

Looking back upon this part of my life, I can pity myself with as quiet and dispassionate a perception as if I were a third person. The illusion, for the time being, was so real, the feelings called up by it so honest and earnest and sacred; and supposing there had been a tangible reality to it—what might not such a woman have made of me, or of any man?

And suppose it pleased God to send forth an army of such women, as I thought her to be, among the lost children of men, women armed not only with the outward and visible sign of beauty, but with that inward and spiritual grace which beauty typifies, one might believe that the golden age would soon be back upon us.

Miss Ellery adroitly avoided all occasions of any critical commitment on my part or on her's. Women soon learn a vast amount of tact and diplomacy on that subject; but she gave me to understand that I was peculiarly congenial to her, and encouraged the outflow of all my romance with the gentlest atmosphere of indulgence. To be sure, I was not the only one whom she thus held with bonds of golden gossamer. She reigned a queen, and had a court at her feet, and the deacon's square, white, prosaic house bristled with the activity and vivacity of Miss Ellery's adorers.

Among them, Will Marshall was especially distinguished. Will was a senior, immensely rich, good-natured as the longest summer day is long, but so idle and utterly incapable of culture that only the liberality of the extra sum paid to a professor who held him in guardianship secured his stay in college classes. It has been my observation that money will secure a great variety of things in this lower world, and among others, will carry a very stupid fellow through college.

Will was a sort of favorite with us all. His good-nature was without limit, and he scattered his money with a free hand, and so we generally spoke of him as "Poor Will;" a nice fellow, if he couldn't write a decent note, and blundered through all his recitations.

Will laid himself, so to speak, at Miss Ellery's feet. He was flush of bouquets and confectionery. He caused the village livery stable to import forthwith a turnout worthy to be a car of Venus herself.

I saw all this, but it never entered my head that Miss Ellery would cast a moment's thought other than those of the gentlest womanly compassion on poor Will Marshall.

The time of the summer vacation drew nigh, and with the close of the term closed the vision of my idyllic experiences with Miss Ellery. To the last, she was so gentle and easy to be entreated. Her lovely eyes cast on me such bright encouraging glances; and she accorded me a farewell moonlight ramble, wherein I walked not on earth, but in the seventh heaven of felicity. Of course there was nothing definite. I told her that I was a poor soldier of fortune, but might I only wear her name in my bosom, it would be a sacred talisman, and give strength to my arm, and she sighed, and looked lovely, and she did not say me nay.

I went home to my mother, and wearied that much-enduring woman, all through the vacation, with the hot and cold fits of my fever. Blessed souls! these mothers, who bear and watch and rear the restless creatures, who by and by come to them with the very heart gone out of them for love of another woman—some idle girl, perhaps, that never knew what it was either to love or care, and that plays with hearts as kittens do with pinballs!

I wrote to Miss Ellery letters long, overflowing, and got back little neatly-worded notes on scented paper, speaking in a general way of the charms of friendship.

But the first news that met me on my return to college broke my soap-bubble at one touch.

"Hurrah! Hal—who do you guess is engaged?"

"I don't know."

"Guess."

"I couldn't guess."

"Why, Miss Ellery—engaged to Bill Marshall."

Alnaschar, in the Arabian tale, could not have been more astonished when his basket of glass-ware fell in glittering nothingness. I stood stupid with astonishment.

"*She* engaged to Will Marshall!—why, boys, he's a fool!"

"But you see he's rich. Oh, it's all arranged; they are to be married next month, and go to Europe for their wedding tour," said Jim Fellows.

And so my idol fell from its pedestal—and my first dream dissolved.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION.

MISS ELLERY was sufficiently mistress of herself, and of circumstances, to close our little pastoral in the most graceful and amiable manner possible. I received a beautiful rose-scented note from her, saying that the very kind interest in her happiness which I always had expressed, and the extremely pleasant friendship which had arisen between us, made her desirous of informing me, &c., &c. Thereupon followed the announcement of her engagement, terminating with the assurance that whatever new ties she might form, or scenes she might visit, she should ever cherish a pleasant remembrance of the delightful hours spent beneath the elms of X., and indulge the kindest wishes for my future success and happiness.

I, of course, crushed the rose-scented missive in my hand, in the most approved tragical style, and felt that I had been deceived, betrayed and undone. I passed forthwith into that cynical state of young manhood, in which one learns for the first time what a mere unimportant drop his own most terribly earnest and excited feelings may be in the tumbling ocean of the existing world.

This is a valley of humiliation, which lies, in very many cases, just a day's walk beyond the palace beautiful with all its fascinations.

The moral geographer, John Bunyan, to whom we are indebted for much wholesome information, tells us that while it is extremely difficult to descend gracefully into this valley, and pilgrims generally accomplish it at the expense of many a sore trip and stumble, yet when once they are fairly down, it presents many advantages of climate and soil not other where found.

The shivering to pieces of the first ideal, while it breaks ruthlessly and scatters much that is really and honestly good and worthy, breaks up no less a certain stock of unconscious self conceit, which young people are none the worse for having lessened.

The very assumption, so common in the early days of life, that we have feelings of a peculiar sacredness above the comprehension of the common herd, and for which only the selectest sympathy is possible, is one savoring a little too much of the unregenerate natural man, to be safely let alone to grow and thrive.

Natures, in particular, whose ideality is largely in the ascendant, are apt to begin life with the scheme of building a high and thick stone wall of reticence around themselves, and enthroning therein an idol, whose rites and service are to be performed with a contemptuous indifference to all the rest of mankind.

When this idol is suddenly disenchanted by some stroke of inevitable reality, and we discern that the image which we had supposed to be the shrine of a divinity, is only a very earthly doll, stuffed with saw-dust,one's pinnacles and battlements—the whole temple in short, that we have prided ourselves on, comes tumbling down about us like the walls of Jericho, not without a certain sense of the ridiculous. Though, like other afflictions, this is not for the present joyous, still the space thus cleared in our mind may be so cultivated as afterwards to bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness.

In my case, my idol was utterly defaced and destroyed in my eyes, because I could not conceal from myself that she was making a marriage wholly without the one element that above all others marriage requires.

Miss Ellery was perfectly well aware of the mental inferiority of poor Bill Marshall, and had listened unreprovingly to the half-contemptuous pity with which it was customary among us to speak of him. I remembered how patronizingly I had often talked of him to her, "Really not a bad fellow—only a little weak, you see;" and the pretty, graceful drollery in her eyes. I remembered things that these same eyes had looked at me, when he blundered and miscalled words in conversation, and a thousand sayings and intimations, each by itself indefinite as the boundary between two tints of the rainbow, by which she showed a superior sense of pleasure in my conversation and society.

And was all this acting and insincerity? I thought not. I was and am fully convinced that had I only been possessed of the wealth of Bill Marshall, Miss Ellery would infinitely have preferred me as a life companion; and it was no very serious amount of youthful vanity to imagine that I should have proved a more entertaining one. I can easily imagine that she made the decision with some gentle regret at first,—regret dried up like morning dew in the full sunlight of wedding diamonds, and capable of being put completely to sleep upon a couch of cashmere shawls.

With what indignant bitterness did I listen to all the details of the impending wedding from fluent Jim Fellows, who, being from Portland and well posted in all the gossip of the circle in which she moved, enlightened our entry with daily and weekly bulletins of the grandeur and splendors that were being, and to be.

"Boys, only think! Her wedding present from him is a set of diamonds valued at twenty-five thousand dollars. Bob Rivers saw them on exhibition at Tiffany's. Then she has three of the most splendid cashmere shawls that ever were imported into Maine. Captain Sautelle got them from an Indian Prince, and there's no saying what they would have cost at usual rates. I tell you Bill is going it in style, and they are going to be married with drums and trumpets, cymbals and dances; such a wedding as will make old Portland stare; and then off they are going to travel no end of time in Europe, and see all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them."

Now, I suppose none of us doubted that could Miss Ellery have attained the diamonds and the cashmeres and the fortune, with all its possibilities of luxury and self-indulgence, without the addition of the husband, nothing would have been wanting to complete her good fortune; but it is a condition in the way of a woman's making a fortune by marriage, as it was with Faust's compact with an unmentionable party, that it can only be ratified by the sacrifice of herself—herself, and for life! A sacrifice most awful and holy when made in pure love, and most fearful when made for any other consideration. The fact that Miss Ellery could make it was immediate and complete disenchantment to me.

Mine is not, I suppose, the only case where the ideal which has been formed under the brooding influence of a noble mother is shattered by the hand of a woman. Some woman, armed with the sacramental power of beauty, enkindles the highest manliness of the youth, and is, in his eyes, the incarnate form of purity and unworldly virtue, the high prize and incitement to valor, patience, constancy and courage, in the great life-battle.

But she sells herself before his eyes, for diamonds and laces, and trinkets and perfumes; for the liberty of walking on soft carpets and singing in gilded cages; and all the world laughs at his simplicity in supposing that, a fair chance given, any woman would ever do otherwise. Is not beauty woman's capital in trade, the price put into her hand to get whatever she needs; and are not the most beautiful, as a matter of course, destined prizes of the richest?

Miss Ellery's marriage was to me a great awakening, a coming out of a life of pure ideas and sentiment into one of external realities. Hitherto, I had lived only with people all whose measures and valuations had been those relating to the character—the intellect and the heart. Never in my father's house had I heard the gaining of money spoken of as success in life, except as far as money was needed to advance education, and education was a means for doing good. My father had his zeal, his earnestness, his exultations, but they all related to things *to be done* in his life-work; the saving of souls, the conversion of sinners, the gathering of churches, the repression of intemperance and immorality, the advancement of education. My elder brothers had successfully entered the ministry under his influence, and in counsels with them where to settle, I had never heard the question of salary or worldly support even discussed. The first, the only question I ever heard considered, was *What work was needed to be done,* and what fitness for the doing of it; taking for granted the record, that where the Kingdom of God and its righteousness were first sought, all things would be added.

Thus all my visions of future life had in them something of the innocent verdancy of the golden age, when noble men strove for the favor of fair women, by pureness, by knowledge, by heroism,—and the bravest won the crown from the hand of the most beautiful.

And suddenly to my awakened eyes the whole rushing cavalcade of fashionable life swept by, bearing my princess, amid waving feathers and flashing jewels and dazzling robes and merry laughs and jests, leaving me by the way-side dazed and covered with dust, to plod on alone.

Now first I felt the shame which comes over a young man, that he has not known the world as old worldlings know it.

In the discussions among the boys, relating to this marriage, I first learned the power of that temptation which comes upon every young man to look on wealth as the first object in a life race.

Woman is by order of nature the conservator of the ideal. Formed of finer clay, with nicer perceptions, and refined fiber, she is the appointed priestess to guard the poetry of life from sacrilege; but if she be bribed to betray the shrine, what hope for us? "If the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?"

My acquaintance with Miss Ellery had brought me out of my scholastic retirement, and made me an acquaintance of the whole bevy of the girls of X. Miss Ellery had been invited and fêted in all the families, and her special train of adorers had followed her, and thus I was "*au* *courant*" of all the existing girl-world of our little town. It was curious to remark what a silken flutter of wings, what an endless volubility of tongues there was, about this engagement and marriage, and how, on the whole, it was treated as the height of splendor and good fortune. My rosy-faced friend, Miss Dotha, was invited to the festival as bridesmaid, and returned thereafter "trailing clouds of glory" into the primitive circles of X; and my cynical bitterness of soul took a sort of perverse pleasure in the amplifications and discussions that I constantly heard in the tea-drinking circles of the town.

"Oh, girls, you've no idea about those diamonds," said Miss Dotha; "great big diamonds as large as peas, and just as clear as water! Bill Marshall made them send orders to Europe specially for the purpose; then she had a pearl set that his mother gave, and his sister gave an amethyst set for a breakfast suit! and you ought to have seen the presents! It was a perfect bazar! The Marshalls are an enormously rich family, and they all came down splendidly; old uncle Tom Marshall gave a solid silver dining set embossed with gold, and old Aunt Tabitha Marshall gave a real Sèvres china tea-set, that was taken out of one of the royal palaces in France, at the time of the French Revolution. Captain Atkins was in France about the time they were sacking palaces, and doing all such things, and he brought away quite a number of things that found their way into some of these rich old Portland families. Her wedding veil was given by old Grandmamma Marshall, and was said to have been one that belonged to Queen Marie Antoinette, taken by some of those horrid women when they sacked the Tuileries, and sold to Captain Atkins; at any rate, it was the most wonderful point lace, just like an old picture."

Fancy the drawing of breaths, the exclamations, the groans of delight, from a knot of pretty, well-dressed, nice country girls, at these wonderful glimpses into Paradise.

"After all," I said, "I think this custom of loading down a woman with finery just at her marriage hour, is giving it when she is least able to appreciate it. Why distract her with gew-gaws at the very moment when her heart must be so full of a new affection that she cares for nothing else? Miss Ellery is probably so lost in her love for Mr. Marshall, that she scarcely gives a thought to these things, and really forgets that she has them. It would be much more in point to give them to some girl that hasn't a lover."

I spoke with a simple, serious air, as if I had most perfect faith in my words, and a general gentle smile of amusement went round the circle, rippling into a laugh out-right, on the faces of some of the gayer girls. Miss Dotha said:

"Oh, come, now, Mr. Henderson, you are too severe."

"Severe!" said I; "I can't understand what you mean, Miss Dotha. You don't mean, of course, to intimate that Miss Ellery is *not* in love with the man she has married?"

"Oh, now!" said Miss Dotha, laughing, "you know perfectly, Mr. Henderson—we all know—it's pretty well understood, that this wasn't *exactly* what you call a love-match; in fact, I know," she added with the assurance of a confidant, "that she had great difficulty in *making up her mind;* but her family were very anxious for the match, and his family thought it would be such a good thing for him to marry and settle down, you know, so one way and another she concluded to take him."

"And, after all, Will Marshall is a good-natured creature," said Miss Smith.

"And going to Europe is such a temptation," said Miss Brown.

"And she must marry some time," said Miss Jones, "and one can't have *every* thing, you know. Will is certain to be kind to her, and let her have her own way."

"For my part," said pretty Miss Green, "I'm free to say that I don't blame any girl that has a chance to get such a fortune, for doing it as Miss Ellery has. I've always been poor, and pinched and plagued; never can go any where, or see anything, or dress as I want to; and if I had a chance, such as Miss Ellery had, I think I should be a fool not to take it."

"Well," said Miss Black, reflectively, "the only question is, couldn't Miss Ellery have waited and found a man who had more intellect, and more culture, whom she could respect and love, and who had money, too? She had such extraordinary beauty and such popular manners, I should have thought she might."

"Oh, well," said Miss Dotha, "she was getting on—she was three-and-twenty already—and nobody of just the right sort had turned up—'a bird in the hand'—you know. After all, I dare say she can love Will Marshall well enough."

Well enough! The cool philosophic tone of this phrase smote on my ear curiously.

"And pray, fair ladies, how much is 'well enough?'" said I.

"Well enough to keep the peace," said Miss Green, "and each let the other alone, to go their own ways and have no fighting."

Miss Green was a pretty, spicy little body, with a pair of provoking hazel eyes; who talked like an unprincipled little pirate, though she generally acted like a nice woman. In less than a year after, by the by, she married a home missionary, in Maine, and has been a devoted wife and mother in a little parish somewhere in the region of Skowhegan, ever since.

But I returned to my room gloriously misanthropic, and for some time my thoughts, like bees, were busy gathering bitter honey. I gave up visiting in the tea-drinking circles of X. I got myself a dark sombrero hat, which I slouched down over my eyes in bandit style when I walked the street and met with any of my former gentle acquaintances. I wrote my mother most sublime and awful letters on the inconceivable vanity and nothingness of human life. I read Plato and Æschylus, and Emerson's Essays, and began to think myself an old Philosopher risen from the dead. There was a melancholy gravity about all my college exercises, and I began to look down on young freshmen and sophomores with a serene compassion, as a sage who has passed through the vale of years and learned that all is vanity.

The valley of humiliation may have its charms—it is said that there are many flowers that grow there, and nowhere else, but for all that, a young fellow, so far as I know, generally walks through the first part of it in rather a surly and unamiable state.

To be sure, had I been wise, I should have been ready to return thanks on my knees for my disappointment. True, the doll was stuffed with saw-dust, but it was not *my* doll. I had not learned the cheat when it was forever too late to help myself, and was not condemned to spend life in vain attempts to make a warm, living friend of a cold marble statue. Many a man has succeeded in getting his first ideal, and been a miserable man always thereafter, and therefor.

I have lived to hear very tranquilly of Mrs. Will Marshall's soirées and parties, as she reigns in the aristocratic circles of New York; and to see her, still like a polished looking-glass, gracefully reflecting every one's whims and tastes and opinions with charming suavity, and forgetting them when their backs are turned; and to think that she is the right thing in the right place—a crowned Queen of Vanity Fair.

I have become, too, very tolerant and indulgent to the women who do as she did,—use their own charms as the coin wherewith to buy the riches and honors of the world.

The world has been busy for some centuries in shutting and locking every door through which a woman could step into wealth, except the door of marriage. All vigor and energy, such as men put forth to get this golden key of life, is condemned and scouted as unfeminine; and a woman belonging to the upper classes, who undertakes to get wealth by honest exertion and independent industry, loses caste, and is condemned by a thousand voices as an oddity and a deranged person. A woman gifted with beauty, who sells it to buy wealth, is far more leniently handled. That way of getting money is not called unwomanly; and so long as the whole force of the world goes that way, such marriages as Miss Ellery's and Bill Marshall's will be considered *en règle.*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BLUE MISTS.

MY college course was at last finished satisfactorily to my mother and friends. What joy there is to be got in college honors was mine. I studied faithfully and graduated with the valedictory.

Nevertheless I came back home again a sadder if not a wiser man than I went. In fact a tendency to fits of despondency and dejection had been growing upon me in these last two years of my college life.

With all the self-confidence and conceit that is usually attributed to young men, and of which they have their share undoubtedly, they still have their times of walking through troubled waters, and sinking in deep mire where there is no standing.

During my last year, the question "What are you good for?" had often borne down like a nightmare upon me. When I entered college all was distant, golden, indefinite, and I was sure that I was good for almost anything that could be named. Nothing that ever had been attained by man looked to me impossible. Riches, honor, fame, any thing that any other man unassisted had wrought out for himself with his own right arm, I could work out also.

But as I measured myself with real tasks, and as I rubbed and grated against other minds and whirled round and round in the various experiences of college life, I grew smaller and smaller in my own esteem, and oftener and oftener in my lonely hours it seemed as if some evil genius delighted to lord it over me and sitting at my bed-side or fire-side to say "What are you good for, to what purpose all the pains and money that have been thrown away on you? You'll never be anything; you'll only mortify your poor mother that has set her heart on you, and make your Uncle Jacob ashamed of you." Can any anguish equal the depths of those blues in which a man's whole self hangs in suspense before his own eyes, and he doubts whether he himself, with his entire outfit and apparatus, body, soul, and spirit, isn't to be, after all, a complete failure? Better, he thinks never to have been born, than to be born to no purpose. Then first he wrestles with the question, What is life for, and what am I to do or seek in it? It seems to be not without purpose, that the active life-work of the great representative Man of Men was ushered in by a forty days' dreary wandering in the wilderness hungry, faint, and tempted of the Devil; for certainly, after education has pretty thoroughly waked up all there is in a man, and the time is at hand that he is to make the decision what to do with it, there often comes a wandering, darkened, unsettled, tempted passage in his life. In Christ's temptations we may see all that besets the young man.

The daily bread question, or how to get a living,—the ambitious heavings, or the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, all to be got by some yielding to Satan,—the ostentatious impulse to come down on the world with a rush and a sensation,—these are mirrored in a young man's smaller life just as they were in that great life. The whole Heavens can be reflected in the little pool as in the broad ocean!

All these elements of unrest had been boiling in my mind during the last year. Who wants to be nothing in the great world? No *young* man at this time of his course. The wisdom of becoming nothing that he may possess all things is too high for this stage of immaturity.

I came into college as simple, and contented, and satisfied, as a huckleberry bush in a sweet-fern pasture. I felt rich enough for all I wanted to do, and my path of life lay before me defined with great simplicity.

But my intimacy with Miss Ellery, her marriage and all that pertained to it, had brought before my eyes the world of wealth and fashion, a world which a young collegian may try to despise, and about which he may write the most disparaging moral reflections, but which has, after all, its power to trouble his soul. The consciousness of being gloveless, and threadbare in toilet, comes over one in certain atmospheres, as the consciousness of nakedness to Adam and Eve. It is true that in the institution where I attended, as in many other rural colleges in New England, I was backed up by a majority of healthy-minded, hardy men, of real mark and worth, children of honest toil and self-respecting poverty, who were bravely working their way up through education to the prizes and attainments of life. Simple economies were therefore well understood and respected in the college.

Nevertheless there is something not altogether vulgar in the attractions which wealth enables one to throw around himself. I was a social favorite in college, and took a stand among my fellows as a writer and speaker, and so had a considerable share of that sincere sort of flattery which college boys lavish on each other. I was invited and made much of by some whose means were ample, whose apartments were luxuriously and tastefully furnished, but who were none the less good scholars and high-minded gentlemanly fellows.

In their vacations I had been invited to their houses, and had seen all the refinement, the repose, the ease and the quietude that comes from the possession of wealth in the hands of those who know how to use it. Wealth in such hands gives opportunities of the broadest culture, ability to live in the wisest manner, freedom to choose the healthiest surroundings both for mind and body, not restricted by considerations of expense; and how could I think it anything else than an object ardently to be sought?

It is true, my rich friends seemed equally to enjoy the vacations in my little, plain, mountain home. People generally are insensible to advantages they have always enjoyed, and have an appetite for something new; so the homely rusticity of our house, the perfect freedom from conventionalities, the wild, mountain scenery, the wholesome detail of farm life, the barn with its sweet stores of hay, and its nooks and corners and hiding places, the gathering in of our apples, and the making of cider, the corn-huskings and Thanksgiving frolics, seemed to have their interest and delights to them, and they often told me I was a lucky fellow to be born to such pleasant surroundings. But I thought within myself, It is easy to say this when you feel the control of thousands in your pocket, when if you are tired you can go to any land or country of the earth for change of scene.

In fact we see in history that the crusade of St. Francis in favor of Poverty was not begun by a poor man, but by a young nobleman who had known nothing hitherto but wealth and luxury. It is from the rich, if from any, that our grasping age must learn renunciation and simplicity. It is easier to renounce a good which one has tried and of which one knows all the attendant thorns and stings than to renounce one that has been only painted by the imagination, and whose want has been keenly felt. When I came to the College I came from the controlling power of home influences. At an early age I had felt the strength of that sphere of spirituality that encircled the lives of my parents, and, being very receptive and sympathetic, had reflected in my childish nature all their feelings.

I had renounced the world before I knew what the world was. I had joined my father's church and was looked upon as one destined in time to take up my father's work of the ministry.

Four years had passed and I came back to my mother, weakened and doubting, indisposed to take up the holy work to which in my early days I looked forward with enthusiasm, yet with all the sadness which comes from indecision as to one's life-object.

To be a minister is to embrace a life of poverty, of toil, of self-denial. To do this, not only with cheerfulness but with an enthusiasm which shall bear down all before it, which shall elevate it into the region of moral poetry and ideality, requires a fervid, unshaken faith. The man must feel the power of an endless life, be lifted above things material and temporal to things sublime and eternal.

Now it is one peculiarity of the professors of the Christian religion that they have not, at least of late years, arranged their system of education with any wise adaptation to having their young men come out of it *Christians*. In this they differ from many other religionists. The Brahmins educate their sons so that they shall infallibly become Brahmins; the Jews so that they shall infallibly be Jews; the Mohammedans so that they shall be Mohammedans; but the Christians educate their sons so that nearly half of them turn out unbelievers—professors of no religion at all.

There is a book which the Christian world unite in declaring to be an infallible revelation from Heaven. It has been the judgment of critics that the various writings in this volume excel other writings in point of mere literary merit as much as they do in purity and elevation of the moral sentiment. Yet it is remarkable that the critical study of these sacred writings in their original tongues is not in most of our Christian colleges considered as an essential part of the education of a Christian gentleman, while the heathen literature of Greece and Rome is treated as something indispensable, and to be gained at all hazards.

It is a fact that from the time that the boy begins to fit for college, his mind is so driven and pressed with the effort to acquire the classical literature, that there is no time to acquire the literature of the Bible, neither is it associated in his mind with the dignity and respect of a classical attainment. He *must* be familiar with Horace and Ovid, with Cicero and Plato, Æschylus and Homer in their original tongues, but the majestic poetry of the Old Testament, and its sages and seers and prophets, become with every advancing year more unintelligible to him. A thoroughly educated graduate of most of our colleges is unprepared to read intelligently many parts of Isaiah or Ezekiel or Paul's epistles. The scripture lessons of the church service often strike on his ear as a strange quaint babble of peculiar sounds, without rhyme or reason. Uncultured and uneducated in all that should enable him to understand them, he is only preserved by a sort of educational awe from regarding them as the jargon of barbarians.

Meanwhile, this literature of the Bible, strange, weird, sibylline, and full of unfulfilled needs and requirements of study, is being assailed in detail through all the courses of a boy's college life. The objections to it as a divine revelation relate to critical questions in languages of which he is ignorant, and yet they are everywhere; they are in the air he breathes, they permeate all literature, they enter into modern science, they disintegrate and wear away, bit by bit, his reverence and his confidence.

This work had been going on insensibly in my head during my college life, notwithstanding the loyalty of my heart. During those years I had learned to associate the Bible with the most sacred memories of home, with the dearest loves of home life. It was woven with remembrances of daily gatherings around the family altar, with scenes of deepest emotion when I had seen my father and mother fly to its shelter and rest upon its promises. There were passages that never recurred to me except with the sound of my father's vibrating voice, penetrating their words with a never dying power. The Bible was to me like a father and a mother, and the doubts, and queries, the respectful suggestions of incredulity, the mildly suggestive abatements of its authority, which met me, now here and now there, in all the course of my readings and studies, were as painful to me as reflections cast on my father's probity or my mother's honor.

I would not listen to them, I would not give them voice, I smothered them in the deepest recesses of my heart, while meantime the daily pressure that came on me in the studies and requirements of college life left me neither leisure nor inclination to pursue the researches that should clear them up.

To be sure, nothing is so important as the soul—nothing is of so much moment as religion, and the question "Is this God's book or is it not?" is the question of questions. It underlies all things, and he who is wise would drop all other things and undergo any toil and make any studies that should fit him to judge understandingly on this point. But I speak from experience when I say that the course of study in christian America is so arranged that a boy, from the grammar school upward till he graduates, is so fully pressed and overladen with all other studies that there is no probability that he will find the time or the inclination for such investigation.

In most cases he will do just what I did, throw himself upon the studies proposed to him, work enough to meet the demands of the hour, and put off the acquisition of that more important knowledge to an indefinite future, and sigh, and go backward in his faith.

But without faith or with a faith trembling and uncertain, how is a man to turn his back on the world that is before him—the world that he can see, hear, touch and taste—to work for the world that is unseen and eternal?

I will not repeat the flattering words that often fell on my ear and said to me, "You can make your way anywhere; you can be anything you please." And then there were voices that said in my heart, "I may have wealth, and with it means of power, of culture, of taste, of luxury. If I only set out for that, I may get it." And then, in contrast, came that life I had seen my father live, in its grand simplicity, in its enthusiastic sincerity, in its exulting sense of joy in what he was doing, down to the last mortal moment, and I wished, oh, how fervently! that I could believe as he did. But to be a minister merely from a sense of duty—to bear the burden of poverty with no perception of the unspeakable riches which Christ hath placed therein—who would not shrink from a life so grating and so cold? To choose the ministry as a pedestal for oratory and self-display and poetic religious sentiment, and thus to attain distinction and easy position, and the command of fashionable luxury, seemed to me a temptation to desecration still more terrible, and I dreaded the hour which should close my college life and make a decision inevitable.

It was with a sober and sad heart that I closed my college course and parted from class-mates—jolly fellows with whom had rolled away the four best years of my life—years that as one goes on afterwards in age look brighter and brighter in the distance. It was a lonesome and pokerish operation to dismantle the room that had long been my home, to bargain away my furniture, pack my books, and bid a final farewell to all the old quiddities and oddities that I had grown attached to in the quaint little village. The parting from Alma Mater is a second leaving of home—and this time for the great world. There is no staving off the battle of life now—the tents are struck, the camp-fires put out, and one must be on the march.

CHAPTER IX.

AN OUTLOOK INTO LIFE.

MY coming back to my native town was an event of public notoriety. I had won laurels, and as I was the village property, my laurels were duly commented on and properly appreciated. Highland was one of those thrifty Yankee settlements where every house seems to speak the people so well-to-do, and so careful, and progressive in all the means of material comfort. There was not a house in it that was not in a sort of healthy, growing state, receiving, from time to time, some accession that showed that the Yankee aspiration was busy, stretching and enlarging. This had a new bay-window, and that had a new veranda; the other, new, tight, white picket fences all round the yard. Others rejoiced in a fresh coat of paint. But all were alive, and apparently self-repairing. There was to every house the thrifty wood-pile, seasoning for winter; the clean garden, with its wealth of fruit and its gay borders of flowers; and every new kind of flower, and every choice new fruit, found somewhere a patron who was trying a hand at it.

Highland was a place worth living in just for its scenery. It was at that precise point of the country where the hills are inspiriting, vivacious, reminding one of the Psalm,—"The little hills rejoice on every side!" Mountains are grand, but they also are dreary. For a near prospect they overpower too much, they shut out the sun, they have savage propensities, untamable by man, shown once in a while in land-slides and freshets; but these half-grown hills uplift one like waves of the sea. In summer they are wonderful in all possible shades of greenness; in autumn they are like a mystical rainbow—an ocean of waves, flamboyant with every wonderful device of color; and even when the leaves are gone, in November, and nothing left but the bristling steel-blue outlines of trees, there is a wonderful purple haze, a veil of dreamy softness, around them, that makes you think you never saw them so beautiful.

So I said to myself, as I came rambling over hill and dale back to the old homestead, and met my mother's bright face of welcome at the door. I was the hero of the hour at home, and everything had been prepared to make me welcome. My brother, who kept the homestead, had relinquished the prospect of a college life, and devoted himself to farming, but looked on me as the most favored of mortals in the attainments I had made. His young wife and growing family of children clustered around my mother and leaned on her experience; and as every one in the little village knew and loved her, there was a general felicitation and congratulation on the event of my return and my honors.

"See him in his father's pulpit afore long," said Deacon Manning, who called the first evening to pay his respects; "better try his hand at the weekly prayer meeting, and stir us up a bit."

"I think, Deacon," said I, "I shall have to be one of those that learn in silence, awhile longer. I may come to be taught, but I certainly cannot teach."

"Well, now, that's modest for a young fellow that's just been through college! They commonly are as feathery and highflying as a this year's rooster, and ready to crow whether their voice breaks or not," said the deacon. 'Learn in silence!' Well, that 'ere beats all for a young man!"

I thought to myself that the good deacon little knew the lack of faith that was covered by my humility.

Since my father's death, my mother had made her home with my Uncle Jacob. Her health was delicate, and she preferred to enjoy the honors of a grandmother at a little distance. My Uncle Jacob had no children. Aunt Polly, his wife, was just the softest, sleekest, most domestic dove of a woman whose wings were ever covered with silver. I always think of her in some soft, pearly silk, with a filmy cap, and a half-handkerchief crossed over a gentle, motherly bosom, soft moving, soft speaking, but with a pair of bright, hazel eyes, keen as arrows to send their glances into every place in her dominions. Let anybody try sending in a false account to Aunt Polly, and they will see that the brightness of her eyes was not merely for ornament. Yet everything she put her hand to went so exactly, so easily, you would have said those eyes were made for nothing but reading, for which Aunt Polly had a great taste, and for which she found abundance of leisure.

My mother and she were enjoying together a long and quiet Saturday afternoon of life, reading to each other, and quietly and leisurely discussing all that they read,—not merely the last novel, as the fashion of women in towns and cities is apt to be, but all the solid works of philosophy and literature that marked the times. My uncle's house was like a bookseller's stall,—it was overrunning with books. The cases covered the walls; they crowded the corners and angles; and still every noteworthy book was ordered, to swell the stock.

My mother and aunt had read together Lecky, and Buckle, and Herbert Spencer, with the keen critical interest of fresh minds. Had it troubled their faith? Not in the least; no more than it would that of Mary on the morning after the resurrection! There is a certain moral altitude where faith becomes knowledge, and the bat-wings of doubt cannot fly so high. My mother was dwelling in that land of Beulah, where the sun always shineth, and the bells of the heavenly city are heard, and the shining ones walk. All was clear to her, all bright, all real, in "the beyond;" but that kind of evidence is above the realm of heavy-footed reason. The "joy unspeakable," the "peace that passeth understanding," are things that cannot be passed from hand to hand. Else I am quite sure my mother would have taken the crown of joy from her head and the peace from her bosom, and given them to me. But the "white stone with the new name" is Christ's gift to each for himself, and "no man knoweth it save he that receiveth it."

But these witnesses who stand gazing into heaven are not without their power on us who stand lower. It steadied my moral nerves, so to speak, that my mother had read and weighed the words that were making so much doubt and shaking; that she fully comprehended them, and that she smiled without fear.

She listened without distress, without anxiety, to all my doubts and falterings. "You must pass through this; you will be led; it will all come right," she said; "and then perhaps you will be the guide of others."

I had feared to tell her that I had abandoned the purpose of the ministry, but I found it easy.

"I would not have you embrace the ministry for anything but a true love," she said, "any more than I would that you should marry a wife for any other reason. If ever the time comes that you feel you *must* be that, it will be your call; but you can be God's minister otherwise than through the pulpit."

"Talk over your plans with your uncle," she said; "he is in your father's place now."

In fact, my uncle, having no children of his own, had set his heart on me, and was disposed to make me heir, not only to his very modest personal estate, but also to his harvest of ideas and opinions,—all that backwater of thoughts and ideas that accumulate on the mind of a man who thinks and reads a great deal in a lonely neighborhood. So he took me up as a companion in his daily rides over the country.

"Well, Harry, where next?" he said to me the day after my return, as we were driving together. "What are you about? Going to try the ministry?"

"I dare not; I am not fit. I know father wanted it, and prayed for it, and nothing would be such a joy to mother, but——"

My uncle gave a shrewd, sidelong glance on me.

"I suppose you are like a good many fellows; an education gives them a general shaking up, and all their beliefs break from their lashings and go rolling and tumbling about like spars and oil-casks in a storm on ship-board."

"I can't say that is true of all my beliefs; but yet a great many things that I tried to regard as certain are untied. I have too many doubts for a teacher."

"Who hasn't? I don't know anything in heaven or earth that forty unanswerable questions can't be asked about."

"You know," answered I, "Tennyson says,

> 'There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds.'"

"H'm! that depends. Doubt is very well as a sort of constitutional crisis in the beginning of one's life; but if it runs on and gets to be chronic, it breaks a fellow up, and makes him morally spindling and sickly. Men that *do* anything in the world must be men of strong convictions; it won't do to go through life like a hen, craw-crawing and lifting up one foot, and not knowing where to set it down next."

"But," said I, "while I am passing through the constitutional crisis, as you call it, is the very time I must make up my mind to teach others on the most awful of all subjects. I cannot and dare not. I must be a learner for some years to come, and I must be a learner without any pledges, expressed or implied, to find the truth this way or that."

"Well," said my uncle; "I'm not so greatly concerned about that—the Lord needs other ministers besides those in the pulpit. Why, man, the sermons on the evidences of Christianity that have come home to me most have been preached by lay preachers in poor houses and lonely churches, by ignorant men and women, and little children. There's old Aunt Sarah there," he said, pointing with his whip to a brown house in the distance, "that woman is dying of a cancer, that slowly eats away her life in lingering agony, and all her dependence is the work of a sickly, consumptive daughter, and yet she is more than resigned to her lot, she is so cheerful, so thankful, so hopeful, there is such a blessed calm peace, and rest, and sweetness in that house, that I love to go there. The influence of that woman is felt all through the village—*she* preaches to some purpose."

"Because she *knows* what she believes," I said.

"It was the same with your father, Harry. Now, my boy," he added, turning to me with the old controversial twinkle in his eye, and speaking in a confidential tone—"The fact is, I never agreed with your father doctrinally, there were weak spots in his system all along, and I always told him so. I could trip him and floor him in an argument, and have done it a hundred times," he said, giving a touch to his horse.

I thought to myself that it was well enough that my father wasn't there to hear that statement, otherwise there would have been an immediate tilting match, and the whole ground to be gone over.

"Yes," he said; "it wasn't mainly in your father's theology that his strength lay—it was the Christ in him—the great warm heart—his crystal purity and simplicity—his unworldly earnestness and honesty. He was a godly man and a manly man both, and he sowed seed all over this State that came up good men and good women. Yes, there are hundreds and hundreds in this State to-day that are good men and good women, mainly because he lived. *That's* what I call success in life, Harry, when a man carries himself so that he turns into seed-corn and makes a harvest of good people. You may upset a man's reasonings, and his theology may go to the dogs, but a brave Christian life you can't upset, it will tell. Now, Harry, are you going to try for that?"

"God helping me, I will," I said.

"You see, as to the theologies," he added, "I think it has been well said that the Christian world just now is like a ship that's tacking, it has lost the wind on one side and not quite got it on the other. The growth of society, the development of new physical laws, and this modern scientific rush of the human mind is going to modify the man-made theologies and creeds; some of them will drop away just as the blossom does when the fruit forms, but Christ's religion will be just the same as ever—his words will not pass away."

"But then," I said, "there is a whole labyrinth of perplexing questions about this Bible. What is inspiration? What ground does it cover? How much of all these books is inspired? What is their history? How came we by them? What evidence have we that the record gives us Christ's words uncorrupted?"

"If you had been brought up in Justin Martyr's time or the days of the primitive Christians you would have been put to study all these things first and foremost in your education, but we modern Christians teach young men everything else except what we profess to think the most important; and so you come out of college ignorant, just where knowledge is most vital."

"Well, that is past praying for now," said I.

"Yes; but even now there is a way out—just as going through a bog you plant your foot hard on what land there is, and then take your bearings—so you must do here. The way to get rid of doubts in religion, is to go to work with all our might and *practice* what we *don't* doubt, and that you can do whatever your calling or profession."

"I shall certainly try," said I.

"For example," said my uncle, "there's the Sermon on the Mount. Nobody has any doubt about that, there it lies —plain enough, and enough of it—not a bit of what's called theology in it. Not a word of information to settle the mooted questions men wrangle over, but with a direct answer to just the questions any thoughtful man must want to have answered when he looks at life. Is there a Father in the heavens? Will he help us if we ask? May the troubles of life be our discipline? Is there a better life beyond? And how are we to get that? There is Christ's philosophy of life in that sermon, and Christ's mode of dealing with actual existing society; and he who undertakes in good faith to square his heart and life by it will have his hands full. The world has been traveling eighteen hundred years and not come fully into the light of its meaning. There has never been a Christian state or a Christian nation, according to that. That document is in modern society just like a lump of soda in a tumbler of vinegar, it keeps up a constant commotion, and will do so till every particle of life is adjusted on its principles. The man who works out Christ's teachings into a palpable life-form, preaches Christianity, no matter what his trade or calling. He may be a coal heaver or he may be a merchant, or a lawyer, or an editor—he preaches all the same. Men always know it when they meet a bit of Christ's sermons walking out bodily in good deeds; they're not like worldly wisdom, and have a smack of something a good deal higher than common sense, but when people see it they say, 'Yes—that's the true thing.' Now one of our Presidents, General Harrison, found out on a certain day that through a flaw in the title deeds he was owner to half the city of Cincinnati. What does he do? Why, simply he says to himself, 'These people have paid their money in good faith, and I'll do by them as I'd be done by,' and he goes to a lawyer and has fresh deeds drawn out for the whole of 'em, and lived and died a poor, honest man. That action was a preaching of Christ's doctrine as I take it, and if you'll do as much whenever you get a chance, it's no matter what calling you take for a pulpit. So now tell me what are you thinking of setting yourself about?"

"I intend to devote myself to literature," said I. "I always had a facility for writing, while I never felt the call or impulse toward public speaking; and I think the field of current literature opens a wide scope. I have had already some success in having articles accepted and well spoken of, and have now some promising offers. I have an opportunity to travel in Europe as correspondent of two papers, and I shall study to improve myself. In time I may become an editor, and then perhaps at last proprietor of a paper. So runs my scheme of life, and I hope I shall be true to myself and my religion in it. I shall certainly try to. Current literature—the literature of newspapers and magazines, is certainly a power."

"A very great power, Harry," said my uncle; "and getting to be in our day a tremendous power, a power far outgoing that of the pulpit, and that of books. This constant daily self-asserting literature of newspapers and periodicals is acting on us tremendously for good or for ill. It has access to us at all hours and gets itself heard as a preacher cannot, and gets itself read as scarcely any book does. It ought to be entered into as solemnly as the pulpit, for it is using a great power. Yet just now it is power without responsibility. It is in the hands of men who come under no pledge, pass no examination, give no vouchers, though they hold a power more than that of all other professions or books united. One cannot be a doctor, or a lawyer, or a minister, unless some body of his fellows looks into his fitness to serve society in these ways; but one may be turned loose to talk in every family twice a day, on every subject, sacred and profane, and say anything he chooses without even the safeguard of a personal responsibility. He shall speak from behind a screen and not be known. Now you know old Dante says that the souls in the other world were divided into three classes, those who were for God and those who were for the Devil, and those who were for neither, but for themselves. It seems to me that there's a vast many of these latter at work in our press—smart literary adventurers, who don't care a copper what they write up or what they write down, wholly indifferent which side of a question they sustain, so they do it smartly, and ready to sell their wit, their genius and their rhetoric to the highest bidder. Now, Harry, I'd rather see you a poor, threadbare, hard-worked, country minister than the smartest and brightest fellow that ever kept his talents on sale in Vanity Fair."

"Well," said I, "isn't it just here that your principle of living out a Gospel should come? Must there not be writers for the press who believe in the Sermon on the Mount, and who are pledged to get its principles into life-forms as fast as they can?"

"Yea, verily," said my uncle; "but do you mean to keep faithful to that? You have, say, a good knack at English; you can write stories, and poems, and essays; you have a turn for humor; and now comes the Devil to you and says, 'Show me up the weak points of those reformers; raise a laugh at those temperance men,—those religionists, who, like all us poor human trash, are running religion, and morals, and progress into the ground.' You can succeed; you can carry your world with you. You see, if Virtue came straight down from Heaven with her white wings and glistening robes, and always conducted herself just like an angel, our trial in life wouldn't be so great as it is. But she doesn't. Human virtue is more apt to appear like a bewildered, unprotected female, encumbered with all sorts of irregular bandboxes, dusty, disheveled, out of fashion, and elbowing her way with ungainly haste and ungraceful postures. You know there are stories of powerful fairies who have appeared in this way among men, to try their hearts; and those who protect them when they are feeble and dishonored, they reward when they are glorious. Now, your smart, flippant, second-rate wits never have the grace to honor Truth when she loses her way, and gets bewildered and dusty, and they drive a flourishing business in laughing down the world's poor efforts to grow better."

"I think," said I, "that we Americans have one brilliant example of a man who had keen humor, and used it on the Christian side. The animus of the 'Biglow Papers' is the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount translated into the language of Yankee life, and defended with wit and drollery."

"You say truth, Harry, and it was no small thing to do it; for the Anti-Slavery cause then was just in that chaotic state in which every strange bird and beast, every shaggy, irregular, unkempt reformer, male and female, was flocking to it, and there was capital scope for caricature and ridicule; and all the fastidious, and conservative, and soft-handed, and even-stepping people were measureless in their contempt for this shocking rabble. Lowell stood between them and the world, and fought the battle with weapons that the world could understand. There was a Gospel truth in

'John P. Robinson, he,'

and it did what no sermon could; this is the more remarkable because he used for the purpose a harlequin faculty, that has so often been read out of meeting and excommunicated that the world had come to look at it as ex-officio of the Devil. Whittier and Longfellow made valiant music of the solemn sort, but Lowell evangelized wit."

"The fortunate man," said I, "to have used a great opportunity!"

"Harry, the only way to be a real man, is to have a cause you care for more than yourself. That made your father—that made your New England Fathers—that raises literature above some child's play, and makes it manly—but if you would do it you must count on one thing—that the devil will tempt you in the outset with the bread question as he did the Lord.

"Command that these stones be made bread;"

is the first onset—you'll want money, and money will be offered for what you ought not to write. There's the sensational novel, the blood and murder and adultery story, of which modern literature is full—you can produce it—do it perhaps as well as anybody—it will sell. Will you be bar-keeper to the public, and when the public call for hot brandy sling give it to them, and help them make brutes of themselves? Will you help to vulgarize and demoralize literature if it will pay?"

"No," said I, "not if I know myself."

"Then you've got to begin life with some motive higher than to make money, or get a living, and you'll have sometimes to choose between poisonous nonsense that brings pay, and honest truth that nobody wants."

"And I must tell the Devil that there is a higher life than the bread-life?" said I.

"Yes; get above that, to begin with. Remember the story of General Marion, who invited some British officers to dine with him and gave them nothing but roasted potatoes. They went away and said it was in vain to try to conquer a people when their officers would live on such fare rather than give up the cause. Do you know, Harry, what is my greatest hope for this State? It's this: Two or three years ago there was urgent need to carry this State in an election, and there was no end of hard money sent up to buy votes among our poor farmers: but they couldn't be bought. They had learned, 'Man shall not live by bread alone,' to some purpose. The State went all straight for liberty. What I ask of any man who wants to do a life-work is ability to be happy on a little."

"Well," said I, "I have been brought up to that. I have no expensive habits. I neither drink nor smoke. I am used to thinking definitely as to figures, and I am willing to work hard, and begin at the bottom of the ladder, but I mean to keep my conscience and my religion, and lend a helping hand to the good cause wherever I can."

"Well, now, my boy, there are only two aids that you need for this—one is God, and the other is a true, good woman. God you will have, but the woman—she must be found."

I felt the touch on a sore spot, and so answered, purposely misunderstanding his meaning. "Yes, I have not to go far for her—my mother."

"Oh yes, my boy—thank God for her; but, Harry, you can't take her away from this place; her roots have spread here; they are matted and twined with the very soil; they run under every homestead and embrace every grave. She is so interwoven with this village that she could not take root elsewhere, beside that, Harry, look at the clock of life—count the years, sixty-five, sixty-six, sixty-seven, and the clock never stops! Her hair is all white now, and that snow will melt by and by, and she will be gone upward. God grant I may go first, Harry."

"And I, too," said I, fervently. "I could not live without her."

"You must find one like her, Harry. It is not good for man to be alone; we all need the motherly, and we must find it in a wife. Do you know what I think the prettiest story of courtship I ever read? It's the account of Jacob's marriage with Rebecca, away back in the simple old times. You remember the ending of it,—'And Isaac brought her into her mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebecca and she became his wife, and Isaac was comforted for his mother's death.' There's the philosophy of it," he added; "it's the mother living again in the wife. The motherly instinct is in the hearts of all true women, and sooner or later the true wife becomes a mother to her husband; she guides him, cares for him, teaches him, and catechises him all in the nicest way possible. Why I'm sure I never should know how to get along a day without Polly to teach me the requirings and forbiddens of the commandments; to lecture me for going out without my muffler, and see that I put on my flannels in the right time; to insist that I shall take something for my cough, and raise a rebellion to my going out when there's a north-easter. So much for the body, and as for the soul-life, I believe it is woman who holds faith in the world—it is woman behind the wall, casting oil on the fire that burns brighter and brighter, while the Devil pours on water; and you'll never get Christianity out of the earth while there's a woman in it. I'd rather have my wife's and your mother's opinion on the meaning of a text of Scripture than all the doctors of divinity, and their faith is an anchor that always holds. Some jackanapes or other I read once, said every woman wanted a master, and was as forlorn without a husband as a masterless dog. It's a great deal truer that every man wants a mother; men are more forlorn than masterless dogs, a great deal, when no woman cares for them. Look at the homes single women make for themselves; how neat, how cosy, how bright with the oil of gladness, and then look at old bachelor dens! The fact is, women are born comfort-makers, and can get along by themselves a great deal better than we can."

"Well," said I, "I don't think I shall ever marry. Of course if I could find a woman like my mother, it would be another thing. But times are altered—the women of this day are all for flash and ambition, and money. There are no more such as you used to find in the old days."

"Oh, nonsense, Harry; don't come to me with that sort of talk. Bad sort for a young man—very. What I want to see in a young fellow is a resolution to have a good wife and a home of his own as quick as he can find it. The Roman Catholics weren't so far out of the way when they said marriage was a sacrament. It is the greatest sacrament of life, and that old church does yeoman service to humanity in the stand she takes for Christian marriage. I should call that the most prosperous state when all the young men and women were well mated and helping one another according to God's ordinances. You may be sure, Harry, that you can never be a whole man without a wife."

"Well," I said; "there's time enough for that by and by: if I'm predestinated I suppose it'll come along when I have my fortune made."

"Don't wait to be rich, Harry. Find a faithful, heroic friend that will strike hands with you, poor, and begin to build up your nest together,—that's the way your father and mother did, and who enjoyed more? That's the way your Aunt Polly and I did, and a good time we have had of it. There has always been the handful of meal in the barrel and the little oil in the cruse, and if the way we have always lived is poverty, all I have to say is, poverty is a pretty nice thing."

"But," said I, bitterly, "you talk of golden ages. There are no such women now as you found, the women now are mere effeminate dolls of fashion—all they want is ease and show, and luxury, and they care nothing who gives it—one man is as good as another if he is only rich."

"Tut, tut, boy! Don't you read your Bible? Away back in Solomon's time, it's written, 'Who can find a virtuous woman? Her price is above rubies.' Are rubies found without looking for them, and do diamonds lie about the street? Now, just attend to my words—brave men make noble women, and noble women make brave men. Be a true man first, and some day a true woman will be given you. Yes, a woman whose opinion of you will hold you up if all the world were against you, and whose 'Well done!' will be a better thing to come home to, than the senseless shouting of the world who scream for this thing to-day and that to-morrow."

By this time the horse had turned up the lane, and my mother stood smiling in the door. I marked the soft white hair that shone like a moonlight glory round her head, and prayed inwardly that the heavens would spare her yet a little longer.

CHAPTER X.

COUSIN CAROLINE.

YOU must go and see your cousin Caroline," said my mother, the first evening after I got home; "you've no idea how pretty she's grown."

"She is what I call a pattern girl," said my uncle Jacob, "a girl that can make the most of life."

"She is a model housekeeper and manager," said Aunt Polly.

Now if Aunt Polly called a girl a model housekeeper, it was the same for her that it would be for a man to receive a doctorate from a college; in fact it would be a good deal more, as Aunt Polly was one who always measured her words, and never said anything *pro forma,* or without having narrowly examined the premises.

Elderly people who live in happy matrimony are in a gentle way disposed to be match-makers. If they have sense, as my elders did, they do not show this disposition in any very pronounced way. They never advise a young man directly to try his fortune with "So and so," knowing that that would, in nine cases out of ten, be the direct way to defeat their purpose. So my mother's gentle suggestion, and my uncle Jacob's praise, and Aunt Polly's endorsement, were simply in the line of the most natural remarks.

Cousin Caroline was the daughter of Uncle Jacob's brother, the only daughter in the family. Her father was one of those men most useful and necessary in society, composed of virtues and properties wholly masculine. He was strong, energetic, shrewd, acridly conscientious, and with an intensity of self-will and love of domination. This rugged rock, all granite, had won a tender woman to nestle and flower in some crevice of his heart, and she had clothed him with a garland of sons and one flower of a daughter. Within a year or two her death had left this daughter the mistress of her father's family. I remembered Caroline of old, as my school companion ; the leading scholar, in every study, always good natured, steady, and clear-headed, ready to help me when I faltered in a translation, or the solution of an algebraic problem. In those days I never thought of her as pretty. There were the outlines and rudiments, which might bloom into beauty, but thin, pale, colorless, and deficient in roundness and grace.

I had seen very little of Caroline through my college life ; we had exchanged occasionally a cousinly letter, but in my last vacation she was away upon a visit. I was not, therefore, prepared for the vision which bloomed out upon me from the singer's seat, when I looked up on Sunday and saw her, standing in a shaft of sunlight that lit up her whole form with a kind of glory. I rubbed my eyes with astonishment, as I saw there a very beautiful woman, and beautiful in quite an uncommon style, one which promised a more lasting continuance of personal attraction than is usual with our New England girls. I own, that a head and bust of the Venus de Milo type ; a figure at once graceful, yet ample in its proportions ; a rich, glowing bloom, speaking of health and vigor,—gave a new radiance to eyes that I had always admired, in days when I never had thought of even raising the question of Caroline's beauty. These charms were set off, too, by a native talent for dress,—that sort of instinctive gift that some women have of arranging their toilet so as exactly to suit their own peculiar style. There was nothing fussy, or furbelowed, or gaudy, as one often sees in the dress of a country beauty, but a grand and severe simplicity, which in her case was the very perfection of art.

My Uncle Ebenezer Simmons lived at a distance of nearly two miles from our house, but that evening, after tea, I announced to my mother that I was going to take a walk over to see cousin Caroline. I perceived that the movement was extremely popular and satisfactory in the eyes of all the domestic circle.

Whose thoughts do not travel in this direction, I wonder, in a small country neighborhood? Here comes Harry Henderson home from college, with his laurels on his brow, and here is the handsomest girl in the neighborhood, a pattern of all the virtues. What is there to be done, except that they should straightway fall in love with each other, and taking hold of hands walk up the Hill Difficulty together? I presume that no good gossip in our native village saw any other arrangement of our destiny as possible or probable.

I may just as well tell my readers first as last, that we did not fall in love with each other, though we were the very best friends possible, and I spent nearly half my time at my uncle's house, besetting her at all hours, and having the best possible time in her society; but our relations were as frankly and clearly those of brother and sister as if we had been children of one mother.

For a beautiful woman, Caroline had the least of what one may call legitimate coquetry, of any person I ever saw. There are some women, and women of a high class too, who seem to take a natural and innocent pleasure in the power which their sex enables them to exercise over men, and who instinctively do a thousand things to captivate and charm one of the opposite sex, even when they would greatly regret winning his whole heart. If well principled and instructed they try to keep themselves under control, but they still do a thousand ensnaring things, for no other reason, that I can see, than that it is their nature, and they cannot help it. If they have less principle this faculty becomes their available power, by which they can take possession of all that a man has, and use it to carry their own plans and purposes.

Of this power, whatever it may be, Caroline had nothing; nay, more, she despised it, and received the admiration and attentions which her beauty drew from the opposite sex, with a coldness, in some instances amounting to incivility.

With me she had been from the first so frankly, cheerfully and undisguisedly affectionate and kind, and with such a straightforward air of comradeship and a literal ignoring of everything sentimental, that the very ground of anything like love-making did not seem to exist between us. The last evening before I was to leave for my voyage to Europe, I spent with her, and she gave me a curiously-wrought traveling-case, in which there was a pocket for any imaginable thing that a bachelor might be supposed to want on his travels.

"I wish I could go with you," she said to me, with an energy quite out of her usual line.

"I am sure I wish you could," said I; and what with the natural softness of heart that a young man feels, when he is plunging off from the safe ground of home into the world, and partly from the unwonted glow of feeling that came over Caroline's face, as she spoke, I felt quite a rush of emotion, and said, as I kissed her hand, "Why didn't we think of this before, Caroline?"

"Oh, nonsense, Henry; don't you be sentimental, of all things," she replied briskly, withdrawing her hand. "Of course, I didn't mean anything more than that I wished I was a young fellow like you, free to take my staff and bundle, and make my way in the great world. Why couldn't I be?"

"*You*," said I, "Caroline, you, with your beauty and your talents,—I think you might be satisfied with a woman's lot in life."

"A woman's lot! and what is that, pray? to sit with folded hands and see life drifting by—to be a mere nullity, and endure to have my good friends pat me on the back, and think I am a bright and shining light of contentment in woman's sphere?"

"But," said I, "you know, Caroline, that there is always a possibility in woman's destiny, especially a woman so beautiful as you are."

"You mean marriage. Well, perhaps if I could do as you can, go all over the world, examine and search for the one I want, and find him, the case would be somewhat equal; but my chances are only among those who propose to me. Now, I have read in the Arabian Nights of princesses so beautiful that men came in regiments, to seek the honor of their hand; but such things don't occur in our times in New England villages. My list for selection must be confined to such of the eligible men in this neighborhood as are in want of wives; men who want wives as they do cooking-stoves, and make up their minds that I may suit them. By the by, I have been informed already of one who has had me under consideration, and concluded *not* to take me. Silas Boardman, I understand, has made up his mind, and informed his sisters of the fact, that I am altogether too dressy in my taste for his limited means, and besides that I am too free and independent; so that door is closed to me, you'll observe. Silas won't have me!"

"The conceited puppy!" said I.

"Well, isn't that the common understanding among men —that all the marriageable girls in their neighborhood are on exhibition for their convenience? If the very first idea of marriage with any one of them were not so intensely disagreeable to me, I would almost be willing to let some of them ask me, just to hear what I could tell them. Now you know, Harry, I put *you* out of the case, because you are my cousin, and I no more think of you in that way than if you were my brother, but, frankly, I never yet saw the man that I could by any stretch of imagination conceive of my wanting, or being willing to marry; I know no man that it wouldn't be an untold horror to me to be doomed to marry. I would rather scrub floors on my knees for a living."

"But you do see happy marriages."

"Oh, yes, dear souls, of course I do, and am glad of it, and wonder and admire; yes, I see some happy marriages.

There's Uncle Jacob and his wife, kind old souls, two dear old pigeons of the sanctuary!—how charmingly they get along! and your father and mother—they seemed one soul; it really was encouraging to see that people could live so."

"But you mustn't be too ideal, Caroline; you mustn't demand too much of a man."

"Demand? I don't demand anything of any man, I only want to be let alone. I don't want to wait for a husband to make me a position, I want to make one for myself; I don't want to take a husband's money, I want my own. You have individual ideas of life, you want to work them out; so have I: you are expected and encouraged to work them out independently, while I am forbidden. Now, what would you say if somebody told you to sit down quietly in the domestic circle and read to your mother, and keep the wood split and piled, and the hearth swept, and diffuse a sweet perfume of domestic goodness, like the violet amid its leaves, till by and by some woman should come and give you a fortune and position, and develop your affections,—how would you like that? Now the case with me is just here. I am, if you choose to say it, so ideal and peculiar in my views that there is no reasonable prospect that I shall ever marry, but I want a position, a house and home of my own, and a sphere of independent action, and everybody thinks this absurd and nobody helps me. As long as mother was alive, there was some consolation in feeling that I was everything to her. Poor soul! she had a hard life, and I was her greatest pride and comfort, but now she is gone, there is nothing I do for my father that a good, smart housekeeper could not be hired to do; but you see that would cost money, and the money that I thus save is invested without consulting me: it goes to buy more rocky land, when we have already more than we know what to do with. I sacrifice all my tastes, I stunt my growth mentally and intellectually to this daily tread-mill of house and dairy, and yet I have not a cent that I can call my own, I am a servant working for board and clothes, and because I am a daughter I am expected to do it cheerfully; my only escape from this position is to take a similar one in the family of some man to whom, in addition to the superintendence of his household, I shall owe the personal duties of a wife, and *that* way out you may know I shall never take. So you are sure to find me ten or twenty years hence a fixture in this neighborhood, spoken of familiarly as 'old Miss Caroline Simmons,' a cross-pious old maid, held up as a warning to contumacious young beauties how they neglect their first gracious offer. 'Caroline was a handsome gal in her time,' they'll say, 'but she was too perticklar, and now her day is over and she's left an old maid. She held her head too high and said "No" a little too often; ye see, gals better take their fust chances.'"

"After all, cousin," I said, "though we men are all unworthy sinners, yet sometimes you women do yield to much persuasion, and take some one out of pity."

"I can't do that; in fact I have tried to do it, and can't. This desperate dullness, and restraint, and utter paralysis of progress that lies like a nightmare on one, is a dreadful temptation; when a man offers you a fortune, which will give you ease, leisure, and power to follow all your tastes and a certain independent stand, such as unmarried women cannot take, it is a great temptation."

"But you resisted it!"

"Well, I was sorely tried; there were things I wanted desperately—a splendid house in Boston, pictures, carriages, servants,—oh, I did want them; I wanted the éclat, too, of a rich marriage, but I couldn't; the man was too good a man to be trifled with; if he would only have been a good uncle or grandpa I would have loved him dearly, and been ever so devoted, kept his house beautifully, waited on him like a dutiful daughter, read to him, sung to him, nursed him, been the best friend in the world to him, but his *wife* I could not be; the very idea of it made the worthy creature perfectly repulsive and hateful to me."

"Did you ever try to tell your father how you feel?"

"Of what earthly use? There are people in this world who don't understand each other's vernacular. Papa and I could no more discuss any question of the inner life together than if he spoke Chickasaw and I spoke French. Papa has a respect for my practical efficiency and business talent, and in a certain range of ideas we get on well together. He thinks I have made a great mistake, and that there is a crack in my head somewhere, but he says nothing; his idea is that I have let slip the only chance of my life, but still, as I am a great convenience at home, he is reconciled. I suppose all my friends mourn in secret places over me, and I should have been applauded and commended on all hands if I had done it; but, after all, wouldn't it be a great deal more honest, more womanly, more like a reasonable creature, for me to do just what you are doing, fit myself to make my own way, and make an independence for myself? Really it isn't honest to take a position where you know you can't give the main thing asked for, and keep out somebody perhaps who can. My friend has made himself happy with a woman who perfectly adores him, and ought to be much obliged to me that I didn't take him at his word; good, silly soul that he was."

"But, after all, the Prince may come—the fated knight—Caroline."

"And deliver the distressed damsel?" she said, laughing. "Well, when he comes I'll show him my 'swan's nest among the reeds.' Soberly, the fact is, cousin," she said, "you men don't know us women. In the first place they say that there are more of us born than there are of you: and that doesn't happen merely to give you a good number to choose from, and enable every widower to find a supernumerary; it is because it was meant that some women should lead a life different from the domestic one. The womanly nature can be of use otherwhere besides in marriage, in our world. To be sure, for the largest class of women there is nothing like marriage, and I suppose the usages of society are made for the majority, and exceptional people mustn't grumble if they don't find things comfortable; but I am persuaded that there is a work and a way for those who cannot marry."

"Well, there's Uncle Jacob has just been preaching to me that no *man* can be developed fully without a wife," said I.

"Uncle Jacob has matrimony on the brain! it's lucky he isn't a despotic Czar or, I believe, he'd marry all the men and women, *wille nille.* I grant that the rare, real marriage, that occurs one time in a hundred, is the true ideal state for man and woman, but it doesn't follow that all and everything that brings man and woman together in marriage is blessed, and I take my stand on St. Paul's doctrine that there are both men and women called to some higher state; now, it seems to me that the number of these increases with the advancement of society. Marriage requires so close an intimacy that there must be perfect agreement and sympathy; the lower down in the scale of being one is, the fewer distinctive points there are of difference or agreement. It is easier for John and Patrick, and Bridget and Katy, to find comfortable sympathy and agreement than it is for those far up in the scale of life where education has developed a thousand individual tastes and peculiarities. We read in history of the Rape of the Sabines, and how the women thus carried off at hap-hazard took so kindly to their husbands that they wouldn't be taken back again. Such things are only possible in the barbarous stages of society, when characters are very rudimentary and simple. If a similar experiment were made on women of the cultivated classes in our times I fancy some of the men would be killed; I know *one* would,"—she said with an energetic grasp of her little fist and a flash out of her eyes.

"But the ideal marriage is the thing to be sought," said I.

"For you, who are born with the right to seek, it *is* the thing to be sought," she said; "for me, who am born to wait till I am sought by exactly the right one, the chances are so infinitesimal that they ought not to be considered; I may have a fortune left me, and die a millionaire; there is no actual impossibility in *that* thing's happening—it is a thing that has happened to people who expected it as little as I do—but it would be the height of absurdity to base any calculation upon it: and yet all the arrangements that are made about me and for me, are made on the presumption that I am to marry. I went to Uncle Jacob and tried to get him to take me through a course of medical study, to fit me for a professional life, and it was impossible to get him to take any serious view of it, or to believe what I said; he seemed really to think I was plotting to upset the Bible and the Constitution, in planning for an independent life."

"After all, Caroline, you must pardon me if I say that it does not seem possible that a woman like you will be allowed —that is you know—you will—well—find somebody—that is, you will be less exacting by and by."

"Exacting! why do you use that word, when I don't exact anything? I am not so very ideal in my tastes, I am only *individual;* I must have in myself a certain feeling towards this possible individual, and I don't find it. In one case certainly I asked myself why I didn't? The man was all he should be, I didn't object to him in the slightest degree as a man; but looked on respecting the marriage relation, he was simply intolerable. It must be that I have no vocation to marry, and yet I want what any live woman wants; I want something of my own; I want a life-work worth doing; I want a home of my own; I want money that I can use as I please, that I can give and withhold, and dispose of as absolutely *mine,* and not another's; and the world seems all arranged so as to hinder my getting it. If a man wants to get an education there are colleges with rich foundations, where endowments have been heaped up, and scholarships founded, to enable him to prepare for life at reasonable expense. There are no such for women, and their schools, such as they are, infinitely poorer than those given to men, involve double the expense. If you ask a professional man to teach you privately, he laughs at you, compliments you, and sends you away with the feeling that he considers you a silly, cracked-brain girl, or perhaps an unsuccessful angler in matrimonial waters; he seems to think that there is no use teaching you, because you will throw down all, and run for the first man that beckons to you. That sort of presumption is insufferable to me."

"Oh, well, Carrie, you know those old Doctors, they get a certain jog-trot way of arranging human life; and then men that are happily married are in such bliss, and such women-worshipers that they cannot make up their mind that anybody they care about should not enter their paradise."

"I do not despise their paradise," said Caroline; "I think everybody most happy that can enter it. I am thankful to see that they can. I am delighted and astonished every day at beholding the bliss and satisfaction with which really nice, pretty girls take up with the men they do, and I think it all very delightful; but it's rather hard on me that, since I can't have that, I mustn't have anything else."

"After all, Caroline, is not your dissatisfaction with the laws of nature?"

"Not exactly; I won't quarrel with the will that made me a woman, not in my deepest heart. Neither being a woman do I want to be unwomanly. I would not, if I could, do as Georges Sand did, put on men's clothes and live a man's life. Anything of that sort in a woman is very repulsive and disgusting to me. At the same time, I do think that the customs and laws of society might be modified so as to give to women who do not choose to marry, independent position and means of securing home and fortune. Marriage never ought to be entered on as a means of support. It seems to me that our sex are enough weighted by nature, and that therefore all the laws and institutions of society ought to act in just the contrary direction, and tend to hold us up—to widen our way, to encourage our efforts, because we are the weaker party, and need it most. The world is now arranged for the strong, and I think it ought to be re-arranged for the weak."

I paused, and pondered all that she had been saying.

"My mother—" I began.

"Now, please don't quote your mother to me. I know what she would say. If two angels were sent down from Heaven, the one to govern an empire, and the other to sweep the streets, they would not wish to change with each other; it is perhaps true.

"But then, you see, that is only possible because they are angels. Your mother has got up somewhere into that region, but I am down in the low lands, and must do the best I can on my plane. I can conceive of those moral heights where one thing is just as agreeable as another, but I have not yet reached them. Besides, you know Jacob wrestled with his angel, and was commended for it; and I think we ought to satisfy ourselves by good, strong effort that our lot *is* of God. If we really cannot help ourselves, we may be resigned to it as His will."

"Caroline," I said, "if you might have exactly what you want, what would it have been?"

"In the first place, then, exactly the same education with my brothers. I hear of colleges now, somewhere far out west, where a brother and sister may go through the same course together; that would have suited me. I am impatient of half-education. I am by nature very thorough and exact. I want to be sure of doing whatever I undertake as well as it can be done. I don't want to be flattered and petted for pretty ignorance. I don't want to be tolerated in any half way, slovenly work of any kind because I am a woman. When I have a thorough general education, I then want to make professional studies. I have a great aptitude for medicine. I have a natural turn for the care of sick, and am now sent for far and near as one of the best advisers and watchers in case of sickness. In that profession I don't doubt I might do great good, be very happy, have a cheerful home of my own, and a pleasant life-work; but I don't want to enter it half taught. I want to be able to do as good work as any man's; to be held to the same account, and receive only what I can fairly win."

"But, Caroline, a man's life includes so much drudgery."

"And does not mine? Do you suppose that the care of all the house and dairy, the oversight of all my father's home affairs, is no drudgery? Much of it is done with my own hands, because no other work than mine can content me. But when you and I went to school together, it was just so: you know I worked out my own problems and made my own investigations. Now all that is laid aside; at least, all my efforts are so hap-hazard and painfully incomplete, that it is discouraging to me."

"But would not your father consent?"

"My father is a man wedded to the past, and set against every change in ideas. I have tried to get his consent to let me go and study, and prepare myself to do something worth doing, but he is perfectly immovable. He says I know more now than half the women, and a great deal too much for my good, and that he cannot spare me. At twenty-one he makes no further claim on any of my brothers; their minority comes to an end at a certain period—mine, never."

We were walking in the moonlight up and down under the trees by the house. Caroline suddenly stopped.

"Cousin," she said, "if you succeed; if you get to be what I hope you will—high in the world, a prosperous editor—speak for the dumb, for us whose lives burn themselves out into white ashes in silence and repression."

"I *will*," I said.

"You will write to me; I shall rejoice to hear of the world through you—and I shall rejoice in your success," she added.

"Caroline," I said, "do you give up entirely wrestling with the angel?"

"No; if I did, I should not keep up. I have hope from year to year that something may happen to bring things to my wishes; that I may obtain a hearing with papa; that his sense of justice may be aroused; that I may get Uncle

Jacob to do something besides recite verses and compliment me; that your mother may speak for me."

"You have never told your heart to my mother?"

"No; I am very reticent, and these adoring wives have but one recipe for all our troubles."

"I think, Caroline, that her's is a wide, free nature, that takes views above the ordinary level of things, and that she would understand and might work for you. Tell her what you have been telling me."

"You may, if you please. I will talk with her afterward; perhaps she will do something for me."

CHAPTER XI.

WHY DON'T YOU TAKE HER?

THE next day I spoke to my uncle Jacob of Caroline's desire to study, and said that some way ought to be provided for taking her out of her present confined limits.

He looked at me with a shrewd, quizzical expression, and said: "Providence generally opens a way out for girls as handsome as she is. Caroline is a little restless just at present, and so is getting some of these modern strong-minded notions into her head. The fact is, that our region is a little too much out of the world; there is nobody around here, probably, that she would think a suitable match for her. Caroline ought to visit, now, and cruise about a little in some of the watering-places next summer, and be seen. There are few girls with a finer air, or more sure to make a sensation. I fancy she would soon find the right sphere under these circumstances."

"But does it not occur to you, uncle, that the very idea of going out into the world, seeking to attract and fall in the way of offers of marriage, is one from which such a spirit as Caroline's must revolt? Is there not something essentially unwomanly in it—something humiliating? I know, myself, that she is too proud, too justly self-respecting, to do it. And why should a superior woman be condemned to smother her whole nature, to bind down all her faculties, and *wait* for occupation in a sphere which it is unwomanly to seek directly, and unwomanly to accept when offered to her, unless offered by the one of a thousand for whom she can have a certain feeling?"

"To tell the truth," said my uncle, looking at me again, "I always thought in my heart that Caroline was just the proper person for *you*—just the woman you need—brave, strong, and yet lovely; and I don't see any objection in the way of *your* taking her."

Elderly people of a benevolent turn often get a matter-of-fact way of arranging the affairs of their juniors that is sufficiently amusing. My uncle spoke with a confidential air of good faith of my taking Caroline as if she had been a lot of land up for sale. Seeing my look of blank embarrassment, he went on:

"You perhaps think the relationship an objection, but I have my own views on that subject. The only objection to the intermarriage of cousins is one that depends entirely on similarity of race peculiarities. Sometimes cousins, inheriting each from different races, are physiologically as much of diverse blood as if their parents had not been related, and in that case there isn't the slightest objection to marriage. Now, Caroline, though her father is your mother's brother, inherits evidently the Selwyn blood. She's all her mother, or rather her grandmother, who was a celebrated beauty. Caroline is a Selwyn, every inch, and you are as free to marry her as any woman you can meet."

"You talk as if she were a golden apple, that I had nothing to do but reach forth my hand to pick," said I. "Did it never occur to you that I *couldn't* take her if I were to try?"

"Well, I don't know," said Uncle Jacob, looking me over in a manner which indicated a complimentary opinion. "I'm not so sure of that. She's not in the way of seeing many men superior to you."

"And suppose that she were that sort of woman who did not wish to marry at all?" said I.

My uncle looked quizzical, and said, "I doubt the existence of that species."

"It appears to me," said I, "that Caroline is by nature so much more fitted for the life of a scholar than that of an ordinary domestic woman, that nothing but a most absorbing and extraordinary amount of personal affection would ever make the routine of domestic life agreeable to her.

She is very fastidious and individual in her tastes, too, and the probabilities of her finding the person whom she could love in this manner are very small. Now it appears to me that the taking for granted that all women, without respect to taste or temperament, must have no sphere or opening for their faculties except domestic life, is as great an absurdity in our modern civilization as the stupid custom of half-civilized nations, by which every son, no matter what his character, is obliged to confine himself to the trade of his father. I should have felt it a hardship to be condemned always to be a shoemaker if my father had been one."

"Nay," said my uncle, "the cases are not parallel. The domestic sphere of wife and mother to which woman is called, is divine and god-like; it is sacred, and solemn, and no woman can go higher than that, and anything else to which she devotes herself, falls infinitely below it."

"Well, then," said I, "let me use another simile. My father was a minister, and I reverence and almost adore the ideal of such a minister, and such a ministry as his was. Yet it would be an oppression on me to constrain me to enter into it. I am not adapted to it, or fitted for it. I should make a failure in it, while I might succeed in a lower sphere. Now it seems to me that just as no one should enter the ministry as a means of support or worldly position, but wholly from a divine enthusiasm, so no woman should enter marriage for provision, or station, or support; but simply and only from the most purely personal affection. And my theory of life would be, to have society so arranged that independent woman shall have every facility for developing her mind and perfecting herself that independent man has, and every opportunity in society for acquiring and holding property, for securing influence, and position, and fame, just as man can. If laws are to make any difference between the two sexes, they ought to help, and not to hinder the weaker party. Then, I think, a man might feel that his wife came to him from the purest and highest kind of love—not driven to him as a refuge, not compelled to take him as a *dernier ressort,* now struggling and striving to bring her mind to him, because she *must* marry somebody,—but choosing him intelligently and freely, because he is *the one* more to her than all the world beside."

"Well," said my uncle, regretfully, "of course I don't want to be a matchmaker, but I did hope that you and Caroline would be so agreed; and I think now, that if you would try, you might put these notions out of her head, and put yourself in their place."

"And what if I had tried, and become certain that it was of no use?"

"You don't say she has refused you!" said my uncle, with a start.

"No, indeed!" said I. "Caroline is one of those women whose whole manner keeps off entirely all approaches of that kind. You may rely upon it, uncle, that while she loves me as frankly and truly and honestly as ever sister loved a brother, yet I am perfectly convinced that it is mainly because I have kept myself clear of any misunderstanding of her noble frankness, or any presumption founded upon it. Her love to me is honest comradeship, just such as I might have from a college mate, and there is not the least danger of its sliding into anything else. There may be an Endymion to this Diana, but it certainly won't be Harry Henderson."

"H'm!" said my uncle. "Well, I'm afraid then that she never will marry, and you certainly must grant that a woman unmarried remains forever undeveloped and incomplete."

"No more than a man," said I. "A man who never becomes a father is incomplete in one great resemblance to the Divine Being. Yet there have been men with the element of fatherhood more largely developed in celibacy than is usual in marriage. There was Fénélon, for instance, who was married to humanity. Every human being that he met held the place of a child in his heart. No individual experience of fatherhood could make such men as he more fatherly. And in like manner there are women with more natural motherhood than many mothers. Such are to be found in the sisterhoods that gather together lost and orphan children, and are their mothers in God. There are natures who do not need the development of marriage; they know instinctively all it can teach them. But they are found only in the rarest and highest regions."

"Well," said my uncle, "for every kind of existence in creation God has made a mate, and the eagles that live on mountain tops, and fly toward the sun, have still their kindred eagles. Now, I think, for my part, that if Fénelon had married Madame Guyon, he would have had a richer and a happier life of it, and she would have gone off into fewer vagaries, and they would have left the Church some splendid children, who might, perhaps, have been born without total depravity. You see these perfected specimens owe it to humanity to perpetuate their kind."

"Well," said I, "let them do it by spiritual fatherhood and motherhood. St. Paul speaks often of his converts as those begotten of him—the children of his soul; a thousand-fold more of them there were, than there could have been if he had weighted himself with the care of an individual family. Think of the spiritual children of Plato and St. Augustine!"

"This may be all very fine, youngster," said my uncle, "but very exceptional; yet for all that, I should be sorry to see a fine woman like Caroline withering into an old maid."

"She certainly will," said I, "unless you and mother stretch forth your hands and give her liberty to seek her destiny in the mode in which nature inclines her. You will never get *her* to go husband-hunting. The mere idea suggested to her of exhibiting her charms in places of resort, in the vague hope of being chosen, would be sufficient to keep her out of society. She has one of those independent natures to which it is just as necessary for happiness that she should make her own way, and just as irksome to depend on others, as it is for most young men. She has a fine philosophic mind, great powers of acquisition, a curiosity for scientific research; and her desire is to fit herself for a physician,—a sphere perfectly womanly, and in which the motherly nature of woman can be most beautifully developed. Now, help her with your knowledge through the introductory stages of study, and use your influence afterward to get her father to give her wider advantages."

"Well, the fact is," said my uncle, "Caroline *is* a splendid nurse; she has great physical strength and endurance, great courage and presence of mind, and a wonderful power of consoling and comforting sick people. She has borrowed some of my books, and seemed to show a considerable acuteness in her remarks on them. But somehow the idea that a lovely young woman should devote herself to medicine, has seemed to me a great waste, and I never seriously encouraged it."

"Depend upon it," said I, "Caroline is a woman who will become more charming in proportion as she moves more thoroughly and perfectly in the sphere for which nature has adapted her. Keep a great, stately, white swan shut up in a barn-yard and she has an ungainly gait, becomes morose, and loses her beautiful feathers; but set her free to glide off into her native element and all is harmonious and beautiful. A superior woman, gifted with personal attractions, who is forgetting herself in the enthusiasm of some high calling or profession, never becomes an old maid; she does not wither; she advances as life goes on, and often keeps her charms longer than the matron exhausted by family cares and motherhood. A charming woman, fully and happily settled and employed in a life-work which is all in all to her, is far more likely to be attractive and to be sought than one who enters the ranks of the fashionable waiters on Providence."

"Well, well," said my uncle, "I'll think of it. The fact is, we fellows of three-score ought to be knocked on the head peaceably. We have the bother of being progressive all through our youth, and by the time we get something settled, up comes your next generation and begins kicking it all over. It's too bad to demolish the house we spend our youth in building just when we want rest, and don't want the fatigue of building over."

"For that matter," said I, "the modern ideas of woman's sphere were all thought out and expressed in the Greek mythology ages and ages ago. The Greeks didn't fit every woman to one type. There was their pretty, plump little Aphrodite, and their godlike Venus de Milo; there was Diana—the woman of cold, bright, pure physical organization,—independent, free, vigorous. There was Minerva, the impersonation of the purely intellectual woman, who neither wished nor sought marriage. There was Juno, the housekeeper and domestic queen, and Ceres, the bread-giver and provider. In short, the Greeks conceived a variety of spheres of womanhood; but we, in modern times, have reduced all to one—the vine that twines, and the violet hid in the leaves; as if the Victoria Regia hadn't as good a right to grow as the daisy, and as if there were not female oaks and pines as well as male!"

"Well, after all," he said, "the prevalent type of sex through nature, is that of strength for man and dependence for woman."

"Nay," said I; "if you appeal to nature in this matter of sex, there is the female element in grand and powerful forms, as well as in gentle and dependent ones. The she-lion and tiger are more terrible and untamable than the male. The Greek mythology was a perfect reflection of nature, and clothed woman with majesty and power as well as with grace; how splendid those descriptions of Homer are, where Minerva, clad in celestial armor, leads the forces of the Greeks to battle! What vigor there is in their impersonation of the Diana; the woman strong in herself, scorning physical passion, and terrible to approach in the radiant majesty of her beauty, striking with death the vulgar curiosity that dared to profane her sanctuary! That was the ideal of a woman, self-sufficient, victorious, and capable of a grand, free, proud life of her own, not needing to depend upon man. The Greeks never would have imagined such goddesses if they had not seen such women, and our modern civilization is imperfect if it does not provide a place and sphere for such types of womanhood. It takes all sorts of people to make up a world, and there ought to be provision, toleration, and free course for all sorts."

"Well, youngster," said my uncle, "I think you'll write tolerable leaders for some radical paper, one of these days, but you fellows that want to get into the chariot of the sun and drive it, had better think a little before you set the world on fire. As for your Diana, I thank Heaven she isn't *my* wife, and I think it would be pretty cold picking with your Minerva."

"Permit me to say, uncle, that in this 'latter day glory' that is coming, men have got to learn to judge women by some other standard than what would make good wives *for them*, and acknowledge sometimes a femininity existing in and for itself. As there is a possible manhood complete without woman, so there is a possible womanhood complete without man."

"That's not the Christian idea," said my uncle.

"Pardon me," I replied, "but I believe it is exactly what St. Paul meant when he spoke of the state of celibacy, in devotion to the higher spiritual life, as being a higher state for some men and women than marriage."

"You are on dangerous ground there," said my uncle, "you will run right into monastic absurdity."

"High grounds are always dangerous grounds," said I, "full of pitfalls and precipices, yet the Lord has persisted in making mountains, precipices, pitfalls, and all, and being made they may as well be explored, even at the risk of breaking one's neck. We may as well look every question in the face, and run every inquiry to its ultimate."

"Go it then," said my uncle, "and joy go with you; the chariot of the sun is the place for a prospect! Up with you into it, my boy, that kind of driving is interesting; in fact, when I was young, I should have liked it myself, but if you don't want to kick up as great a bobbery as Phaeton did, you'd better mind his father's advice: spare the whip, and use the reins with those fiery horses of the future."

"But, now," said I, "as the final result of all this, will you help Caroline?"

"Yes, I will; soberly and seriously, I will. I'll drive over there and have a little talk with the girl, as soon as you're gone."

"And, uncle," said I, "if you wish to gain influence with her, don't flatter nor compliment; examine her, and appoint her tasks exactly as you would those of a young man in similar circumstances. You will please her best so; she is ready to do work, and make serious studies; she is of a thorough, earnest nature, and will do credit to your teaching."

"What a pity she wasn't born a boy," said my uncle, under his breath.

"Well, let you and me do what we can," said I, "to bring in such a state of things in this world that it shall no longer be said of any woman that it was a pity not to have been born a man."

Subsequently I spoke to my mother on the same subject and gave her an account of my interview with Caroline.

I think that my mother, in her own secret heart, had cherished very much the same hopes for me that had been expressed by Uncle Jacob. Caroline was an uncommon person, the star of the little secluded neighborhood, and my mother had seen enough of her to know that, though principally absorbed in the requirements of a very hard domestic sphere, she possessed an uncommon character and great capabilities. Between her and my mother, however, there had been that silence which often exists between two natures, both sensitive and both reticent, who seem to act as non-conductors to each other. Caroline stood a little in awe of the moral and religious force of my mother, and my mother was a little chilled by the keen intellectualism of Caroline.

There are people that cannot understand each other without an interpreter, and it is not unfrequently easier for men and women to speak confidentially to each other than to their own sex. There are certain aspects in which each sex is sure of more comprehension than from its own. I served, in this case, as the connecting wire of the galvanic battery to pass the spark of sympathetic comprehension between these two natures.

My mother was one of those women naturally timid, reticent, retiring, encompassed by physical diffidence as with a mantle—so sensitive that, even in an argument with me, the blood would flush into her cheeks—yet, she had withal that deep, brooding, philosophical nature, which revolves all things silently, and with intensest interest, and comes to perfectly independent conclusions in the irresponsible liberty of solitude. How many times has this great noisy world been looked out on, and silently judged by these quiet, thoughtful women of the Virgin Mary type, who have never uttered their magnificat till they uttered it beyond the veil! My mother seemed to be a woman in whom religious faith had risen to that amount of certainty and security, that she feared no kind of investigation or discussion, and had no prejudices or passionate preferences. Thus she read the works of the modern physical philosophical school with a tranquil curiosity, and a patient analysis, apparently enjoying every well-turned expression, and receiving with interest, and weighing with deliberation every record of experiments, and every investigation of facts. Her faith in her religion was so perfect that she could afford all these explorations, no more expecting her Christian hopes to fall, through any discoveries of modern science, than she expected the sun to cease shining on account of the contradictory theories of astronomers. They who have lived in communion with God have a mode of evidence unknown to philosophers; a knowledge at first hand. In the same manner, the wideness of Christian charity gave my mother a most Catholic tolerance for natures unlike her own.

"I have always believed in the doctrine of vocations," she said, as she listened to me; "it is one of those points where the Romish church has shown a superior good sense in discovering and making a place for every kind of nature."

"Caroline has been afraid to confide in you, lest you should think her struggles to rise above her destiny, and her dissatisfaction with it, irreligious."

"Far from it," said my mother; "I wholly sympathize with her; people don't realize what it is to starve faculties; they understand physical starvation, but the slow fainting and dying of desires and capabilities for want of anything to feed upon, the withering of powers for want of exercise, is what they do not understand. This is what Caroline is condemned to, by the fixed will of her father, and whether any mortal can prevail with him, I don't knew."

"*You* might, dear mother, I am sure."

"I doubt it; he has a manner that freezes me. I think in his hard, silent, interior way, he loves me, but any argument addressed to him, any direct attempt to change his opinions and purpose only makes him harder."

"Would it not, then, be her right to choose her course without his consent—and against it?" My mother sat with her blue eyes looking thoughtfully before her.

"There is no point," she said slowly, "that requires more careful handling, to discriminate right from wrong, than the limits of self-sacrifice. To a certain extent it is a virtue, and the noblest one, but there are rights of the individual that ought not to be sacrificed; our own happiness has its *just* place, and I cannot see it to be more right to suffer injustice to one's self than to another, if one can help it. The individual right of self-assertion of child against parent is like the right of revolution in the State, a difficult one to define, yet a real one. It seems to me that one owes it to God, and to the world, to become all that one can be, and to do all that one can do, and that a blind, unreasoning authority that forbids this is to be resisted by a higher law. If I would help *another* person to escape from an unreasoning tyranny, I ought to do as much for myself."

"And don't you think," said I, "that the silent self-abnegation of some fine natures has done harm by increasing in those around them the habits of tyranny and selfishness?"

"Undoubtedly," said my mother, "many wives make their husbands bad Christians, and really stand in the way of their salvation, by a weak, fond submission, and a sort of morbid passion for self-sacrifice—really generous and noble men are often tempted to fatal habits of selfishness in this way."

"Then would it not be better for Caroline to summon courage to tell her father exactly how she feels and views his course and hers?"

"He has a habit," said my mother, "of cutting short any communication from his children that doesn't please him, by bringing down his hand abruptly and saying, 'No more of that, I don't want to hear it.' With me he accomplishes the same by abruptly leaving the room. The fact is," said my mother, after a pause, "I more than suspect that he set his foot on something really vital to Caroline's life, years ago, when she was quite young."

"You mean an attachment?"

"Yes. I had hoped that it had been outgrown or superseded, probably it may be, but I think she is one of the sort in which such an experience often destroys all chance for any other to come after it."

"Were you told of this?"

"I discovered it by an accident, no matter how. I was not told, and I know very little, yet enough to enable me to admire the vigor with which she has made the most of life, the cheerfulness and thoroughness with which she has accepted hard duties. Well," she added, after a pause, "I will talk with Caroline, and we will see what can be done, and then," she added, "we can carry the matter to a higher One, who understands all, and holds all in his hands."

My mother spoke with a bright assured force of this resort, sacred in every emergency.

This was the last night of my stay at home, the next day I was to start for my ship to go to Europe. I sat up late writing to Caroline, and left the letter in my mother's hands.

CHAPTER XII.

I LAY THE FIRST STONE IN MY FOUNDATION.

MY story now opens in New York, whither I am come to seek my fortune as a maker and seller of the invisible fabrics of the brain.

During my year in Europe I had done my best to make myself known at the workshops of different literary periodicals, as a fabricator of these airy wares. I tried all sorts and sizes of articles, from grave to gay, from lively to severe, sowing them broadcast in various papers, without regard to pecuniary profit, and the consequence was that I came back to New York as a writer favorably known, who had made something of a position. To be sure my foot was on the lowest round of the ladder, but it was *on* the ladder, and I meant to climb.

"To climb —— to what?" In the answer a man gives to that question lies the whole character of his life-work. If to climb be merely to gain a name, and a competence, a home, a wife, and children, with the means of keeping them in ease and comfort, the question, though beset with difficulties of practical performance, is comparatively simple. But if in addition to this a man is to build himself up after an ideal standard, as carefully as if he were a temple to stand for eternity; if he is to lend a hand to help that great living temple which God is perfecting in human society, the question becomes more complicated still.

I fear some of my fair readers are by this time impatient to see something of "my wife." Let me tell them for their comfort that at this moment, when I entered New York on a drizzly, lonesome December evening, she was there, fair as a star, though I knew it not. The same may be true of you, young man. If you are ever to be married, your wife is probably now in the world; some house holds her, and there are mortal eyes at this hour to whom her lineaments are as familiar as they are unknown to you. So much for the doctrine of predestination.

But at this hour that I speak of, though the lady in question was a living and blessed fact, and though she looked on the same stars, and breathed the same air, and trod daily the same sidewalk with myself, I was not, as I perceive, any the wiser or better for it at this particular period of my existence.

In fact, though she was in a large part the unperceived spring and motive of all that I did, yet at this particular time I was so busy in adjusting the material foundations of my life that the ideas of marrying and giving in marriage were never less immediately in my thoughts. I came into New York a stranger. I knew nobody personally, and I had no time for visiting.

I had been, in the course of my wanderings, in many cities. I had lingered in Paris, Rome, Florence, and Naples, and, with the exception of London, I never found a place so difficult to breathe the breath of any ideality, or any enthusiasm, or exaltation of any description, as New York. London, with its ponderous gloom, its sullen, mammoth, aristocratic shadows, seems to benumb, and chill, and freeze the soul; but New York impressed me like a great hot furnace, where twig, spray, and flower wither in a moment, and the little birds flying over, drop down dead. My first impulse in life there was to cover, and conceal, and hide in the deepest and most remote caverns of my heart anything that was sacred, and delicate, and tender, lest the flame should scorch it. Balzac in his epigrammatic manner has characterized New York as the city where there is "neither faith, hope, nor charity," and, as he never came here, I suppose he must have taken his impressions from the descriptions of unfortunate compatriots, who have landed strangers and been precipitated into the very rush and whirl of its grinding selfishness, and its desperate don't-care manner of doing things. There is abundance of selfishness and hardness in Paris, but it is concealed under a veil of ideality. The city wooes you like a home, it gives you picture-galleries, fountains, gardens, and grottoes, and a good-natured lounging population, who have nothing to do but make themselves agreeable.

I must confess that my first emotion in making my way about the streets of New York, before I had associated them with any intimacy or acquaintances, was a vague sort of terror, such as one would feel at being jostled among cannibals, who on a reasonable provocation wouldn't hesitate to skin him and pick his bones. There was such a driving, merciless, fierce "take-care-of-yourself, and devil take the hindmost" air, even to the drays and omnibuses, and hackmen, that I had somewhat the feeling of being in an unregulated menagerie, not knowing at what moment some wild beast might spring upon me. As I became more acquainted in the circles centering around the different publications, I felt an acrid, eager, nipping air, in which it appeared to me that everybody had put on defensive armor in regard to his own innermost and most precious feelings, and like the lobster, armed himself with claws to seize and to tear that which came in his way. The rivalry between great literary organs was so intense, and the competition so vivid, that the offering of any flower of fancy or feeling to any of them, seemed about as absurd as if a man should offer a tea-rose bud to the bawling, shouting hackmen that shake their whips and scream at the landing.

Everything in life and death, and time and eternity, whether high as Heaven, or deep as hell, seemed to be looked upon only as subject matter for advertisement, and material for running a paper. Hand out your wares! advertise them and see what they will bring, seemed to be the only law of production, at whose behest the most delicate webs and traceries of fancy, the most solemn and tender mysteries of feeling, the most awful of religious emotions came to have a trademark and market value! In short, New York is the great business mart, the Vanity Fair of the world, where everything is pushed by advertising and competition, not even excepting the great moral enterprise of bringing in the millennium; and in the first blast and blare of its busy, noisy publicity and activity, I felt my inner spirits shrink and tremble with dismay. Even the religion of this great emporium bears the deep impress of the trade-mark, which calendars its financial value.

I could not but think what the sweet and retiring Galilean, who in the old days was weary and worn with the rush of crowds in simple old Palestine, must think if he looks down now, on the way in which his religion is advertised and pushed in modern society. Certain it is, if it be the kingdom of God that is coming in our times, it is coming with very great observation, and people have long since forgotten that they are not to say "Lo, here!" and "Lo, there!" since that is precisely what a large part of the world are getting their living by doing.

These ideas I must confess bore with great weight on my mind, as I had just parted from my mother, whose last words were that whatever else I did, and whether I gained anything for this life or not, she trusted that I would live an humble, self-denying, Christian life. I must own that for the first few weeks of looking into the interior management of literary life in New York, the idea at times often seemed to me really ludicrous. To be humble, yet to seek success in society where it is the first duty to crow from morning till night, and to praise, and vaunt, and glorify, at the top of one's lungs, one's own party, or paper, or magazine, seemed to me sufficiently amusing. However, in conformity with a solemn promise made to my mother, I lost no time in uniting myself with a Christian body, of my father's own denomination, and presented a letter from the Church in Highland to the brethren of the Bethany Church.

And here I will say that for a young man who wants shelter, and nourishment and shade for the development of his fine moral sensibilities, a breakwater to keep the waves of materialism from dashing over and drowning his higher life, there is nothing better, as yet to be found, than a union with some one of the many bodies of differing names and denominations calling themselves Christian Churches. A Christian Church, according to the very best definition of the name ever yet given, is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance; and making due allowance for all the ignorance, and prejudice, and mistakes, and even the willful hypocrisy, which, as human nature is, must always exist in such connections, I must say that I think these Churches are the best form of social moral culture yet invented, and not to be dispensed with till something more fully answering the purpose has been tested for as long a time as they.

These are caravans that cross the hot and weary sands of life, and while there may be wrangling and undesirable administration at times within them, yet, after all, the pilgrim that undertakes alone is but a speck in the wide desert, too often blown away, and withering like the leaf before the wind.

The great congregation of the Bethany on Sabbath days, all standing up together and joining in mighty hymn-singing, though all were outwardly unknown to me, seemed to thrill my heart with a sense of solemn companionship, in my earliest and most sacred religious associations. It was a congregation largely made up of young men, who like myself were strangers, away from home and friends, and whose hearts, touched and warmed by the familiar sounds, seemed to send forth magnetic odors like the interlocked pine trees under the warm sunshine of a June day.

I have long felt that he who would work his brain for a living, without premature wear upon the organ, must have Sunday placed as a sacred barrier of entire oblivion, so far as possible, of the course of his week-day cares. And what oblivion can be more complete than to rise on the wings of religious ordinance into the region of those diviner faculties by which man recognizes his heirship to all that is in God?

In like manner I found an oasis in the hot and hurried course of my week-day life, by dropping in to the weekly prayer-meeting. The large, bright, pleasant room seemed so social and home-like, the rows of cheerful, well-dressed, thoughtful people, seemed, even before I knew one of them, fatherly, motherly, brotherly, and sisterly, as they joined with the piano in familiar hymn-singing, while the pastor sat among them as a father in his family, and easy social conversation went on with regard to the various methods and aspects of the practical religious life.

To me, a stranger, and naturally shy and undemonstrative, this socialism was in the highest degree warming and inspiring. I do not mean to set the praise of this Church above that of a hundred others, with which I might have become connected, but I will say that here I met the types of some of those good old-fashioned Christians that Hawthorne celebrates in his "Celestial Railroad," under the name of Messrs. "Stick to the Right," and "Foot it to Heaven," men better known among the poor and afflicted than in fashionable or literary circles, men who, without troubling their heads about much speculation, are footing it to Heaven on the old, time-worn, narrow way, and carrying with them as many as they can induce to go.

Having thus provided against being drawn down and utterly swamped in the bread-and-subsistence struggle that was before me, I sought to gain a position in connection with some paper in New York. I had offers under consideration from several of them. The conductors of "*The Moral Spouting Horn*" had conversed with me touching their projects, and I had also been furnishing letters for the "*Great Democracy*," and one of the proprietors had invited me to a private dinner, I suppose for the purpose of looking me over and trying my paces before he concluded to purchase me.

Mr. Goldstick was a florid, middle-aged man, with a slightly bald head, an easy portliness of manner, and that air of comfortable patronage which men who are up in the world sometimes carry towards young aspirants. It was his policy and his way to put himself at once on a footing of equality with them, easy, jolly, and free; justly thinking that thereby he gained a more unguarded insight into the inner citadel of their nature, and could see in the easy play of their faculties just about how much they could be made to answer his purposes. I had a chatty, merry dinner of it, and found all my native shyness melting away under his charming affability. In fact, during the latter part of the time, I almost felt that I could have told him anything that I could have told my own mother. What did we not talk about that is of interest in these stirring times? Philosophy, history, science, religion, life, death, and immortality—all received the most graceful off-hand treatment, and were discussed with a singular unanimity of sentiment—that unanimity which always takes place when the partner in a discussion has the controlling purpose to be of the same mind as yourself. When, under the warm and sunny air of this genial nature, I had fully expanded, and confidence was in full blossom, came the immediate business conversation in relation to the paper.

"I am rejoiced," said Mr. Goldstick, "in these days of skepticism to come across a young man with real religious convictions. I am not, I regret to say, a religious professor myself, but I appreciate it, Mr. Henderson, as the element most wanting in our modern life."

Here Mr. Goldstick sighed and rolled up his eyes, and took a glass of wine.

I felt encouraged in this sympathetic atmosphere to unfold to him my somewhat idealized views of what might be accomplished by the daily press, by editors as truly under moral vows and consecrations, as the clergymen who ministered at the altar.

He caught the idea from me with enthusiasm, and went on to expand it with a vigor and richness of imagery, and to illustrate it with a profusion of incidents, which left me far behind him, gazing after him with reverential admiration.

"Mr. Henderson," said he, "*The Great Democracy* is not primarily a money-making enterprise—it is a great moral engine; it is for the great American people, and it contemplates results which look to the complete regeneration of society."

I ventured here to remark that the same object had been stated to me by the *Moral Spouting Horn.*

His countenance assumed at once an expression of intense disgust.

"Is it possible," he said, "that the charlatan has been trying to get hold of you? My dear fellow," he added, drawing near to me with a confidential air, "of course I would be the last man to infringe on the courtesies due to my brethren of the press, and you must be aware that our present conversation is to be considered strictly confidential."

I assured him with fervor that I should consider it so.

"Well, then," he said, "between ourselves, I may say that *The Moral Spouting Horn* is a humbug. On mature reflection," he added, "I don't know but duty requires me to go farther, and say, in the strictest confidence, you understand, that I consider *The Moral Spouting Horn* a swindle."

Here it occurred to me that the same communication had been made in equal confidence, by the proprietor of *The Moral Spouting Horn* in relation to *The Great Democracy.* But, much as I was warmed into confidence by the genial atmosphere of my friend, I had still enough prudence to forbear making this statement.

"Now," said he, "my young friend, in devoting yourself to the service of *The Great Democracy* you may consider yourself as serving the cause of God and mankind in ways that no clergyman has an equal chance of doing. Beside the press, sir, the pulpit is effete. It is, so to speak," he added, with a sweep of the right hand, "nowhere. Of course the responsibilities of conducting such an organ are tremendous, tremendous," he added, reflectively, as I looked at him with awe; "and that is why I require in my writers, above all things, the clearest and firmest moral convictions. Sir, it is a critical period in our history; there is an amount of corruption in this nation that threatens its dissolution; the Church and the Pulpit have proved entirely inadequate to stem it. It rests with the Press."

There was a solemn pause, in which nothing was heard but the clink of the decanter on the glass, as he poured out another glass of wine.

"It is a great responsibility," I remarked, with a sigh.

"Enormous!" he added, with almost a groan, eyeing me sternly. "Consider," he went on, "the evils of the tremendously corrupted literature which is now being poured upon the community. Sir, we are fast drifting to destruction, it is a solemn fact. The public mind must be aroused and strengthened to resist; they must be taught to discriminate; there must be a just standard of moral criticism no less than of intellectual, and that must be attended to in our paper."

I was delighted to find his views in such accordance with my own, and assured him I should be only too happy to do what I could to forward them.

"We have been charmed and delighted," he said, "with your contributions hitherto; they have a high moral tone and have been deservedly popular, and it is our desire to secure you as a stated contributor in a semi-editorial capacity, looking towards future developments. We wish that it were in our power to pay a more liberal sum than we can offer, but you must be aware, Mr. Henderson, that great moral enterprises must always depend, in a certain degree, on the element of self-sacrifice in its promoters."

I reflected, at this moment, on my father's life, and assented with enthusiasm—remarking that "if I could only get enough to furnish me with the necessaries of life I should be delighted to go into the glorious work with him, and give to it the whole enthusiasm of my soul."

"You have the right spirit, young man," he said. "It is delightful to witness this freshness of moral feeling." And thus, before our interview was closed, I had signed a contract of service to Mr. Goldstick, at very moderate wages, but my heart was filled with exulting joy at the idea of the possibilities of the situation.

I was young, and ardent; I did *not*, at this moment, want to make money so much as to make myself felt in the great world. It was the very spirit of Phaeton; I wanted to have a hand on the reins, and a touch of the whip, and guide the fiery horses of Progress.

I had written stories, and sung songs, but I was not quite content with those; I wanted the anonymous pulpit of the Editor to speak in, the opportunity of being the daily invisible companion and counselor of thousands about their daily paths. The offer of Mr. Goldstick, as I understood it, looked that way, and I resolved to deserve so well of him by unlimited devotion to the interests of the paper, that he should open my way before me.

CHAPTER XIII.

BACHELOR COMRADES.

I SOON became well acquainted with my collaborators on the paper. It was a pleasant surprise to be greeted in the foreground by the familiar face of Jim Fellows, my old college class-mate.

Jim was an agreeable creature, born with a decided genius for gossip. He had in perfection the faculty which phrenologists call individuality. He was statistical in the very marrow of his bones, apparently imbibing all the external facts of every person and everything around him, by a kind of rapid instinct. In college, Jim always knew all about every student; he knew all about everybody in the little town where the college was situated, their name, history, character, business, their front door and their back door affairs. No birth, marriage, or death ever took Jim by surprise; he always knew all about it long ago.

Now, as a newspaper is a gossip market on a large scale, this species of talent often goes farther in our modern literary life than the deepest reflection or the highest culture.

Jim was the best-natured fellow breathing; it was impossible to ruffle or disturb the easy, rattling, chattering flow of his animal spirits. He was like a Frenchman in his power of bright, airy adaptation to circumstances, and determination and ability to make the most of them.

"How lucky!" he said, the morning I first shook hands with him at the office of the *Great Democracy;* "you are just on the minute; the very lodging you want has been vacated this morning by old Styles; sunny room—south windows—close by here—water, gas, and so on, all correct; and, best of all, *me* for your opposite neighbor."

I went round with him, looked, approved, and was settled at once, Jim helping me with all the good-natured handiness and activity of old college days. We had a rattling, gay morning, plunging round into auction-rooms, bargaining for second-hand furniture, and with so much zeal did we drive our enterprise, seconded by the co-labors of a charwoman whom Jim patronized, that by night I found myself actually settled in a home of my own, making tea in Jim's patent bachelor tea-kettle, and talking over his and my affairs with the freedom of old cronies. Jim made no scruple in inquiring in the most direct manner as to the terms of my agreement with Mr. Goldstick, and opened the subject succinctly, as follows:

"Now, my son, you must let your old grandfather advise you a little about your temporalities. In the first place; what's Old Soapy going to give you?"

"If you mean Mr. Goldstick," said I——

"Yes," said he, "call him 'Soapy' for short. Did he come down handsomely on the terms?"

"His offers were not as large as I should have liked; but then, as he said, this paper is not a money-making affair, but a moral enterprise, and I am willing to work for less."

"Moral grandmother!" said Jim, in a tone of unlimited disgust. "He be—choked, as it were. Why, Harry Henderson, are your eye-teeth in such a retrograde state as that? Why, this paper is a fortune to that man; he lives in a palace, owns a picture gallery, and rolls about in his own carriage."

"I understood him," said I, "that the paper was not immediately profitable in a pecuniary point of view."

"Soapy calls everything unprofitable that does not yield him fifty per cent. on the money invested. Talk of moral enterprise! What did he engage you for?"

I stated the terms.

"For how long?"

"For one year."

"Well, the best you can do is to work it out now. Never make another bargain without asking your grandfather.

Why, he pays me just double; and you know, Harry, I am nothing at all of a writer compared to you. But then, to be sure, I fill a place you've really no talent for."

"What is that?"

"General professor of humbug," said Jim. "No sort of business gets on in this world without that, and I'm a real genius in that line. I made Old Soapy come down, by threatening to 'rat,' and go to the *Spouting Horn*, and they couldn't afford to let me do that. You see, I've been up their back stairs, and know all their little family secrets. The *Spouting Horn* would give their eye-teeth for me. It's too funny," he said, throwing himself back and laughing.

"Are these papers rivals?" said I.

"Well, I should 'rayther' think they were," said he, eyeing me with an air of superiority amounting almost to contempt. "Why, man, the thing that I'm particularly valuable for is, that I always know just what will plague the *Spouting Horn* folks the most. I know precisely where to stick a pin or a needle into them; and one great object of our paper is to show that the *Spouting Horn* is always in the wrong. No matter what topic is uppermost, I attend to that, and get off something on them. For you see, they are popular, and make money like thunder, and, of course, that isn't to be allowed. "Now," he added, pointing with his thumb upward, "overhead, there is really our best fellow—Bolton. Bolton is said to be the best writer of English in our day; he's an A No. 1, and no mistake; tremendously educated, and all that, and he knows exactly to a shaving what's what everywhere; he's a gentleman, too; we call him the Dominie. Well, Bolton writes the great leaders, and fires off on all the awful and solemn topics, and lays off the politics of Europe and the world generally. When there's a row over there in Europe, Bolton is magnificent on editorials. You see, he has the run of all the rows they have had there, and every bobbery that has been kicked up since the Christian era. He'll tell you what the French did in 1700 this, and the Germans in 1800 that, and of course he prophesies splendidly on what's to turn up next."

"I suppose they give him large pay," said I.

"Well, you see, Bolton's a quiet fellow and a gentleman—one that hates to jaw—and is modest, and so they keep him along steady on about half what *I* would get out of them if I were in his skin. Bolton is perfectly satisfied. If I were he, I shouldn't be, you see. I say, Harry, I know you'd like him. Let me bring him down and introduce him," and before I could either consent or refuse, Jim rattled up stairs, and I heard him in an earnest, persuasive treaty, and soon he came down with his captive.

I saw a man of thirty-three or thereabouts, tall, well formed, with bright, dark eyes, strongly-marked features, a finely-turned head, and closely-cropped black hair. He had what I should call *presence*—something that impressed me, as he entered the room, with the idea of a superior kind of individuality, though he was simple in his manners, with a slight air of shyness and constraint. The blood flushed in his cheeks as he was introduced to me, and there was a tremulous motion about his finely-cut lips, betokening suppressed sensitiveness. The first sound of his voice, as he spoke, struck on my ear agreeably, like the tones of a fine instrument, and, reticent and retiring as he seemed, I felt myself singularly attracted toward him.

What impressed me most, as he joined in the conversation with my rattling, free and easy, good-natured neighbor, was an air of patient, amused tolerance. He struck me as a man who had made up his mind to expect nothing and ask nothing of life, and who was sitting it out patiently, as one sits out a dull play at the theater. He was disappointed with nobody, and angry with nobody, while he seemed to have no confidence in anybody. With all this apparent reserve, he was simply and frankly cordial to me, as a new-comer and a fellow-worker on the same paper.

"Mr. Henderson," he said, "I shall be glad to extend to you the hospitalities of my den, such as they are. If I can at any time render you any assistance, don't hesitate to use me. Perhaps you would like to walk up and look at my books? I shall be only too happy to put them at your disposal."

We went up into a little attic room whose walls were literally lined with books on all sides, only allowing space for the two southerly windows which overlooked the city.

"I like to be high in the world, you see," he said, with a smile.

The room was not a large one, and the center was occupied by a large table, covered with books and papers. A cheerful coal-fire was burning in the little grate, a large leather arm-chair stood before it, and, with one or two other chairs, completed the furniture of the apartment. A small, lighted closet, whose door stood open on the room, displayed a pallet bed of monastic simplicity.

There were two occupants of the apartment who seemed established there by right of possession. A large Maltese cat, with great, golden eyes, like two full moons, sat gravely looking into the fire, in one corner, and a very plebeian, scrubby mongrel, who appeared to have known the hard side of life in former days, was dozing in the other.

Apparently, these *genii loci* were so strong in their sense of possession that our entrance gave them no disturbance. The dog unclosed his eyes with a sleepy wink as we came in, and then shut them again, dreamily, as satisfied that all was right.

Bolton invited us to sit down, and did the honors of his room with a quiet elegance, as if it had been a palace instead of an attic. As soon as we were seated, the cat sprang familiarly on the table and sat down cosily by Bolton, rubbing her head against his coat-sleeve.

"Let me introduce you to my wife," said Bolton, stroking her head. "Eh, Jenny, what now?" he added, as she seized his hands playfully in her teeth and claws. "You see, she has the connubial weapons," he said, "and insists on being treated with attention; but she's capital company. I read all my articles to her, and she never makes an unjust criticism."

Puss soon stepped from her perch on the table and ensconced herself in his lap, while I went round examining his books.

The library showed varied and curious tastes. The books were almost all rare.

"I have always made a rule," he said, "never to buy a book that I could borrow."

I was amused, in the course of the conversation, at the relations which apparently existed between him and Jim Fellows, which appeared to me to be very like what might be supposed to exist between a philosopher and a lively pet squirrel—it was the perfection of quiet, amused tolerance.

Jim seemed to be not in the slightest degree under constraint in his presence, and rattled on with a free and easy slang familiarity, precisely as he had done with me.

"What do you think Old Soapy has engaged Hal for?" he said. "Why, he only offers him—" Here followed the statement of terms.

I was annoyed at this matter-of-fact way of handling my private affairs, but on meeting the eyes of my new friend I discerned a glance of quiet humor which re-assured me. He seemed to regard Jim only as another form of the inevitable.

"Don't you think it is a confounded take-in?" said Jim.

"Of course," said Mr. Bolton, with a smile, "but he will survive it. The place is only one of the stepping-stones. Meanwhile," he said, "I think Mr. Henderson can find other markets for his literary wares, and more profitable ones. I think," he added, while the blood again rose in his cheeks, "that I have some influence in certain literary quarters, and I shall be happy to do all that I can to secure to him that which he ought to receive for such careful work as this. Your labor on the paper will not by any means take up your whole power or time."

"Well," said Jim, "the fact is the same all the world over—the people that grow a thing are those that get the least for it. It isn't your farmers, that work early and late, that get rich by what they raise out of the earth, it's the middlemen and the hucksters. And just so it is in literature; and the better a fellow writes, and the more work he puts into it, the less he gets paid for it. Why, now, look at me," he said, "perching himself astride the arm of a chair, "I'm a genuine literary humbug, but I'll bet you I'll make more money than either of you, because, you see, I've no modesty and no conscience. Confound it all, those are luxuries that a poor fellow can't afford to keep. I'm a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, but I'm just the sort of fellow the world wants, and, hang it, they shall pay me for being that sort of fellow. I mean to make it shell out, and you see if I don't. I'll bet you, now, that I'd write a book that you wouldn't, either of you, be hired to write, and sell one hundred thousand copies of it, and put the money in my pocket, marry the handsomest, richest, and best educated girl in New York, while you are trudging on, doing good, careful work, as you call it."

"Remember us in your will," said I.

"Oh, yes, I will," he said. "I'll found an asylumfor decayed authors of merit—a sort of literary 'Hotel des Invalides.'"

We had a hearty laugh over this idea, and, on the whole, our evening passed off very merrily. When I shook hands with Bolton for the night, it was with a silent conviction of an interior affinity between us.

It is a charming thing in one's rambles to come across a tree, or a flower, or a fine bit of landscape that one can think of afterward, and feel richer for its being in the world. But it is more when one is in a strange place, to come across a man that you feel thoroughly persuaded is, somehow or other, morally and intellectually worth exploring. Our lives tend to become so hopelessly commonplace, and the human beings we meet are generally so much one just like another, that the possibility of a new and peculiar style of character in an acquaintance is a most enlivening one.

There was something about Bolton both stimulating and winning, and I lay down less a stranger that night than I had been since I came to New York.

CHAPTER XIV.

HAPS AND MISHAPS.

I ENTERED upon my new duties with enthusiasm, and produced some editorials, for which I was complimented by Mr. Goldstick.

"That's the kind of thing wanted!" he said; "a firm, moral tone, and steady religious convictions; that pleases the old standards."

Emboldened by this I proceeded to attack a specific abuse in New York administration, which had struck me as needing to be at once righted. If ever a moral trumpet ought to have its voice, it was on this subject. I read my article to Bolton; in fact I had gradually fallen into the habit of referring myself to his judgment.

"It is all perfectly true," he remarked, when I had finished, while he leaned back in his chair and stroked his cat, "but they never will put *that* into the paper, in the world."

"Why!" said I, "if ever there was an abuse that required exposing, it is this."

"Precisely!" he replied.

"And what is the use," I went on, "of general moral preaching that is never applied to any particular case?"

"The use," he replied calmly, "is that that kind of preaching pleases everybody, and increases subscribers, while the other kind makes enemies, and decreases them."

"And you really think that they won't put this article in?' said I.

"I'm certain they won't," he replied. "The fact is this paper is bought up on the other side. Messrs. Goldstick and Co. have intimate connection with Messrs. Bunkam and Chaffem, who are part and parcel of this very affair."

I opened my mouth with astonishment. "Then Goldstick is a hypocrite," I said.

"Not consciously," he answered, calmly.

"Why!" said I, "you would have thought by the way he talked to me that he had nothing so much at heart as the moral progress of society, and was ready to sacrifice everything to it."

"Well,' said Bolton, quietly, "did you never see a woman who thought she was handsome, when she was not? Did you never see a man who thought he was witty, when he was only scurrilous and impudent? Did you never see people who flattered themselves they were frank, because they were obtuse and impertinent? And cannot you imagine that a man may think himself a philanthropist, when he is only a worshiper of the golden calf? That same calf," he continued, stroking his cat till she purred aloud, "has the largest Church of any on earth."

"Well," said I, "at any rate I'll hand it in."

"You can do so," he replied, "and that will be the last you will hear of it. You see, I've been this way before you, and I have learned to save myself time and trouble on these subjects."

The result was precisely as Bolton predicted.

"We must be a little careful, my young friend," said Mr. Goldstick, "how we handle specific matters of this kind; they have extended relations that a young man cannot be expected to appreciate, and I would advise you to confine yourself to abstract moral principles; keep up a high moral standard, sir, and things will come right of themselves. Now, sir, if you could expose the corruptions in England it would have an admirable moral effect, and our general line of policy now is down on England."

A day or two after, however, I fell into serious disgrace. A part of my duties consisted in reviewing the current literature of the day; Bolton, Jim, and I, took that department among us, and I soon learned to sympathize with the tea-tasters, who are said to ruin their digestion by an incessant tasting of the different qualities of tea. The enormous quantity and variety of magazines and books that I had to "sample" in a few days brought me into such a state of mental dyspepsia, that I began to wish every book in the Red Sea. I really was brought to consider the usual pleasant tone of book notices in America to be evidence of a high degree of Christian forbearance. In looking over my share, however, I fell upon a novel of the modern, hot, sensuous school, in which glowing coloring and a sort of religious sentimentalism were thrown around actions and principles which tended directly to the dissolution of society. Here was exactly the opportunity to stem that tide of corruption against which Mr. Goldstick so solemnly had warned me. I made the analysis of the book a text for exposing the whole class of principles and practices it inculcated, and uttering my warning against corrupt literature; I sent it to the paper, and in it went. A day or two after Mr. Goldstick came into the office in great disorder, with an open letter in his hand.

"What's all this?" he said; "here's Sillery and Peacham, blowing us up for being down on their books, and threatening to take away their advertising from us."

Nobody seemed to know anything about it, till finally the matter was traced back to me.

"It was a corrupt book, Mr. Goldstick," said I, with firmness, "and the very object you stated to me was to establish a just moral criticism."

"Go to thunder! young man," said Mr. Goldstick, in a tone I had never heard before. "Have you no discrimination? are you going to blow us up? The *Great Democracy*, sir, is a great moral engine, and the advertising of this publishing house gives thousands of dollars yearly towards its support. It's an understood thing that Sillery and Peacham's books are to be treated handsomely."

"I say, Captain," said Jim, who came up behind us at this time, "let me manage this matter; I'll straighten it out; Sillery and Peacham know me, and I'll fix it with them."

"Come! Hal, my boy!" he said, hooking me by the arm, and leading me out.

We walked to our lodgings together. I was gloriously indignant all the way, but Jim laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"You sweet babe of Eden," said he, as we entered my room, "do get quiet! I'll sit right down and write a letter from the Boston correspondent on that book, saying that your article has created a most immense sensation in the literary circles of Boston, in regard to its moral character, and exhort everybody to rush to the book-store and see for themselves. Now, 'hush, my dear, lie still and slumber,' while I do it."

"Why, do you mean to go to Boston?" said I.

"Only in spirit, my dear. Bless you! did you suppose that the Boston correspondents, or any other correspondents, are there, or anywhere else in fact, that they profess to be? I told you that I was the professor of humbug. This little affair lies strictly in my department."

"Jim!" said I, solemnly, "I don't want to be in such a network of chicanery."

"Oh, come, Hal, nobody else wants to be just where they are, and after all, it's none of your business; you and Bolton are great moral forty-pounders. When we get you pointed the right way for the paper you can roar and fire away at your leisure, and the moral effect will be prodigious. I'm your flying-artillery—all over the field everywhere, pop, and off again; and what is it to you what I do? Now you see, Hal, you must just have some general lines about your work; the fact is, I ought to have told you before. There's Sillery and Peacham's books have got to be put straight along: you see there is no mistake about that; and when you and Bolton find one you can't praise honestly, turn it over to me. Then, again, there's Burill and Bangem's books have got to be put down. They had a row with us last year, and turned over their advertising to the *Spouting Horn*. Now, if you happen to find a bad novel among *their* books show it up, cut into it without mercy; it will give you just as good a chance to preach, with your muzzle pointed the right way, and do exactly as much good. You see there's everything with you fellows in getting you pointed right."

"But," said I, "Jim, this course is utterly subversive of all just criticism. It makes book notices good for nothing."

"Well, they are not good for much," said Jim reflectively. "I sometimes pity a poor devil whose first book has been all cut up, just because Goldstick's had a row with his publishers. But then there's this comfort—what we run down, the *Spouting Horn* will run up, so it is about as broad as it is long. Then there's our Magazines. We're in with the *Rocky Mountains* now—we've been out with them for a year or two and cut up all their articles. Now you see we are in, and the rule is, to begin at the beginning and praise them all straight through, so you'll have plain sailing there. Then there's the *Pacific*—you are to pick on that all you can. I think you had better leave that to me. I have a talent for saying little provoking things that gall people, and that they can't answer. The fact is, the *Pacific* has got to come down a little, and come to our terms, before we are civil to it."

"Jim Fellows"—I began,

"Come, come, go and let off to Bolton, if you have got anything more to say;" he added, "I want to write my Boston letter. You see, Hal, I shall bring you out with flying colors, and get a better sale for the book than if you hadn't written."

"Jim," said I, "I'm going to get out of this paper."

"And pray, my dear Sir, what will you get into?"

"I'll get into one of the religious papers."

Jim upon this leaned back, kicked up his heels, and laughed aloud. "I could help you there," he said. "I do the literary for three religious newspapers now. These solemn old Dons are so busy about their tweedle-dums and tweedle-dees of justification and election, baptism and church government, that they don't know anything about current literature, and get us fellows to write their book notices. I rather think that they'd stare if they should read some of the books that we puff up. I tell you, Christy's Minstrels are nothing to it. Think of it, Hal,—the solemn *Holy Sentinel* with a laudatory criticism of Dante Rossetti's 'Jenny' in it—and the *Trumpet of Zion* with a commendatory notice of Georges Sand's novels." Here Jim laughed with a fresh impulse. "You see the dear, good souls are altogether too pious to know anything about it, and so we liberalize the papers, and the publishers make us a little consideration for getting their books started in religious circles."

"Well, Jim," said I, "I want to just ask you, do you think this sort of thing is right?"

"Bless your soul now!" said Jim, "if you are going to begin with that, here in New York, where are you going to end—'Where do you 'spect to die when you go to?'—as the old darkey said."

"Well," said I, "would you like to have Dante Rossetti's '*Jenny*' put into the hands of *your* sister or younger brother, recommended by a religious newspaper?"

"Well, to tell the truth, Hal, I didn't write those notices. Bill Jones wrote them. Bill's up to anything. You know every person in England and this country has praised Dante Rossetti, and particularly 'Jenny,' and religious papers may as well be out of the world as out of fashion,—and so mother she bought a copy for a Christmas present to sister Nell. And I tell you if I didn't get a going over about it!

"I showed her the article in the *Holy Sentinel*, but it didn't do a bit of good. She made me promise I wouldn't write it up, and I never have. She said it was a shame. You see mother isn't up to the talk about high art, that's got up nowadays about Dante Rossetti and Swinburne, and those. I thought myself that 'Jenny' was coming it pretty strong,—and honest now, I never could see the sense in it. But then you see I am not artistic. If a fellow should tell a story of that kind to my sister, I should horsewhip him, and kick him down the front steps. But he dresses it up in poetry, and it lies around on pious people's tables, and nobody dares to say a word because it's ' artistic.' People are so afraid they shall not be supposed to understand what high art is, that they'll knuckle down under most anything. That's the kind of world we live in. Well! I didn't make the world and I don't govern it. But the world owes me a living, and hang it! it shall give me one. So you go up to Bolton, and leave me to do my work; I've got to write columns, and then tramp out to that confounded water-color exhibition, because I promised Snooks a puff,—I shan't get to bed till twelve or one. I tell you it's steep on a fellow now."

I went up to Bolton, boiling, and bubbling and seething, with the spirit of sixteen reformers in my veins. The scene, as I opened the door, was sufficiently tranquilizing. Bolton sat reading by the side of his shaded study-lamp, with his cat asleep in his lap; the ill-favored dog, before mentioned, was planted by his side, with his nose upturned, surveying him with a fullness of doggish adoration and complacency, which made his rubbishy shop-worn figure quite an affecting item in the picture. Crouched down on the floor in the corner, was a ragged, unkempt, freckle-faced little boy, busy doing a sum on a slate.

"Ah! old fellow," he said, as he looked up and saw me. "Come in; there, there, Snubby," he said to the dog, pushing him gently into his corner; "let the gentleman sit down. You see you find me surrounded by my family," he said. "Wait one minute," he added, turning to the boy in the corner, and taking his slate out of his hand, and running over the sum. "All right, Bill. Now here's your book." He took a volume of the *Arabian Nights* from the table, and handed it to him, and Bill settled himself on the floor, and was soon lost in "Sindbad the sailor." He watched him a minute or two, and then looked round at me, with a smile. "I wouldn't be afraid to bet that you might shout in that fellow's ear and he wouldn't hear you, now he is fairly in upon that book. Isn't it worth while to be able to give such perfect bliss in this world at so small an expense? I've lost the power of reading the *Arabian Nights*, but I comfort myself in seeing this chap."

"Who is he?" said I.

"Oh, he's my washerwoman's boy. Poor fellow. He has hard times. I've set him up in selling newspapers. You see, I try now and then to pick up one grain out of the heap of misery, and put it into the heap of happiness, as John Newton said."

I was still bubbling with the unrest of my spirit, and finally overflowed upon him with the whole history of my day's misadventures, and all the troubled thoughts and burning indignations that I had with reference to it.

"My dear fellow," he said, "take it easy. We have to accept this world as a *fait accompli*. It takes some time for us to learn how little we can do to help or to hinder. You cannot take a step in the business of life anywhere without meeting just this kind of thing; and one part of the science of living is to learn just what our own responsibility is, and to let other people's alone. The fact is," he said, "the growth of current literature in our times has been so sudden and so enormous that things are in a sort of revolutionary state with regard to it, in which it is very difficult to ascertain the exact right. For example, I am connected with a paper which is simply and purely, at bottom, a financial speculation; its owners must make money. Now, they are not bad men as the world goes—they are well-meaning men—amiable, patriotic, philanthropic—some of them are religious; they, all of them, would rather virtue would prevail than vice, and good than evil; they, all of them, would desire every kind of abuse to be reformed, and every good cause to be forwarded, that could be forwarded without a sacrifice of their main object. As for me, I am not a holder or proprietor. I am simply a servant engaged by these people for a certain sum. If I should sell myself to say what I do not think, or to praise what I consider harmful, to propitiate their favor, I should be a dastard. They understand perfectly that I never do it, and they never ask me to. Meanwhile, they employ persons who will do these things. I am not responsible for it any more than I am for anything else which goes on in the city of New York. I am allowed my choice among notices, and I never write them without saying, to the best of my ability, the exact truth, whether literary or in a moral point of view. Now, that is just my stand, and if it satisfies you, you can take the same."

"But," said I, "it makes me indignant, to have Goldstick talk to me as he did about a great self-denying moral enterprise—why, that man must know he's a liar."

"Do you think so?" said he. "I don't imagine he does. Goldstick has considerable sentiment. It's quite easy to get him excited on moral subjects, and he dearly loves to hear himself talk—he is sincerely interested in a good number of moral reforms, so long as they cost him nothing; and when a man is working his good faculties, he is generally delighted with himself, and it is the most natural thing in the world, to think that there is more of him than there is. I am often put in mind of that enthusiastic young ruler that came to the Saviour, who had kept all the commandments, and seemed determined to be on the high road to saintship. The Saviour just touched him on this financial question, and he wilted in a minute. I consider that to be still the test question, and there are a good many young rulers like him, who *don't* keep all the commandments."

"Your way of talking," said I, "seems to do away with all moral indignation."

He smiled, and then looked sadly into the fire—"God help us all," he said. "We are all struggling in the water together and pulling one another under—our best virtues are such a miserable muddle—and then—there's the beam in our own eye."

There was a depth of pathos in his dark eyes as he spoke, and suddenly a smile flashed over his features, and looking around, he said—

"So, what do you think of that, my cat,
And what do you think of that, my dog?"

CHAPTER XV.

I MEET A VISION.

"I SAY, Hal, do you want to get acquainted with any of the P. G.'s here in New York? If you do, I can put you on the track."

"P. G.'s?" said I, innocently.

"Yes; you know that's what Plato calls pretty girls. I don't believe you remember your Greek. I'm going out this evening where there's a lot of 'em—splendid house on Fifth avenue—lots of tin—girls gracious. Don't know which of 'em I shall take yet. Don't you want to go with me and see?"

Jim stood at the looking-glass brushing his hair and arranging his necktie.

"Jim Fellows, you are a coxcomb," said I.

"I don't know why I shouldn't be," said he. "The girls fairly throw themselves at one's head. They are up to all that sort of thing. Besides, I'm on the lookout for my fortune, and it all comes in the way of business. Come, now, don't sit there writing all the evening. Come out, and let me show you New York by gaslight."

"No," said I; "I've got to finish up this article for the *Milky Way*. The fact is, a fellow must be industrious to make anything, and my time for seeing girls isn't come yet. I must have something to support a wife on before I look round in that direction."

"The idea, Harry, of a good-looking fellow like you, not making the most of his advantages! Why, there are nice girls in this city that could help you up faster than all the writing you can do these ten years. And you sitting, moiling and toiling, when you ought to be making some lovely woman happy!"

"I shall never marry for money, Jim, you may depend upon that."

"Bah, bah, black sheep," said Jim. "Who is talking about marrying for money? A fine girl is none the worse for fifty thousand dollars, and I can give you a list of twenty that you can go round among until you fall in love, and not come amiss anywhere, if it's falling in love that you want to do."

"Oh, come, Jim," said I, "do finish your toilet and be off with yourself if you are going. I don't blame a *woman* who marries for money, since the whole world has always agreed to shut her out of any other way of gaining an independence. But for a man, with every other avenue open to him, to mouse about for a rich wife, I think is too dastardly for anything."

"That would make a fine point for a paragraph," said Jim, turning round to me, with perfect good-humor. "So I advise you to save it for the moral part of the paper. You see, if you waste too much of that sort of thing on me, your mill may run low. It's a deuced hard thing to keep the moral agoing the whole year, you'll find."

"Well," said I, "I am going to try to make a home for a wife, by good, thorough work, done just as work ought to be done; and I have no time to waste on society in the meanwhile."

"And when you are ready for her," said Jim, "I suppose you expect to receive her per 'Divine Providence' Express, ticketed and labeled, and expenses paid. Or, may be she'll be brought to you some time by genii, as the Princess of China was brought to the Prince of Tartary, when he was asleep. I used to read about that in the Arabian tales."

I give this little passage of my conversation with Jim, because it is a pretty good illustration of the axiom, that "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." When we have announced any settled purpose or sublime intention, in regard to our future course of life, it seems to be the delight of fortune to throw us directly into circumstances in which we shall be tempted to do what we have just declared we never will do, and the fortunes of our lives turn upon the most inconsiderable hinges.

Mine turned upon an umbrella.

The next morning I had business in the very lowermost part of the city, and started off without my umbrella; but being weather-wise, and discerning the face of the sky, I went back to my room and took it. It was one of those little pet objects of *vertu,* to which a bachelor sometimes treats himself in lieu of domestic luxuries. It had a finely-carved handle, which I bought in Dieppe, and which caused it to be peculiar among all the umbrellas in New York.

It was one of those uncertain, capricious days that mark the coming in of April, when Nature, like a nervous beauty, doesn't seem to know her own mind, and laughs one moment and cries the next with a perplexing uncertainty.

The first part of the morning the amiable and smiling predominated, and I began to regret that I had encumbered myself with the troublesome precaution of an umbrella while tramping around down town. In this mood of mind I sat at Fulton Ferry waiting the starting of the Bleecker street car, when suddenly the scene was enlivened to my view by the entrance of a young lady, who happened to seat herself exactly opposite to me.

Now, as a writer, an observer of life and manners, I had often made quiet studies of the fair flowers of modern New York society as I rode up and down in the cars. In no other country in the world, perhaps, has a man the opportunity of being *vis-à-vis* with the best and most cultured class of young women in the public conveyances. In England, this class are veiled and secluded from gaze by all the ordinances and arrangements of society. They go out only in their own carriage; they travel in reserved compartments of the railway carriages; they pass from these to reserved apartments in the hotels, where they are served apart in family privacy as much as in their own dwellings. So that the stranger traveling in the country, unless he have introductions to the personal hospitality of these circles, has almost no way of forming any opinion even as to the external appearance of its younger women. In France, a still stricter *régime* watches over the young, unmarried girl, who is kept in the shade of an almost conventual seclusion till marriage opens the doors of her prison. The young American girl, however, of the better and of the best classes, is to be met and observed everywhere. She moves through life with the assured step of a princess, too certain of her position and familiar with her power even to dream of a fear. She looks on her surroundings from above with the eye of a mistress, and expects, of course, to see all things give way before her, as in our republican society they generally do.

During the few months I had spent in New York I had diligently kept out of society. The permitted silent acquaintance with my fair countrywomen which I gained while riding up and down the street conveyances, became, therefore, a favorite and harmless source of amusement. Not an item in the study escaped me, not a feather in that rustling and wonderful plumage of fashion that bore them up, was unnoted. I mused on styles, and characteristics, and silently wove in my own mind histories to correspond with the various physiognomies I studied. Let not the reader imagine me staring point blank, with my mouth open, at all I met. The art of noting without appearing to note, of seeing without seeming to see, was one that I cultivated with assiduity.

Therefore, without any impertinent scrutiny, I satisfied myself of the fact that a feminine presence of an unusual kind and quality was opposite to me. It was, at first glance, one of the New York princesses of the blood, accustomed to treading on clouds and breathing incense. There was a quiet *savoir faire* and self-possession as she sat down on her seat, as if it were a throne; and there was a species of repressed vitality and decision in all her little involuntary movements that interested me as live things always do interest, in proportion to their quantum of life. We all are familiar with the fact that there are some people, who, let them sit still as they may, and conduct themselves never so quietly, nevertheless impress their personality on those around them, and make their presence felt. An attraction of this sort drew my eyes toward my neighbor. She was a young lady of medium height, slender and elastic figure, features less regularly beautiful than piquant and expressive. I remarked a pair of fine dark eyes the more from the contrast with a golden crêpe of hair. The combination of dark eyes and lashes with fair hair, always produces effect of a striking character. She was attired as became a Fifth Avenue princess, who has the world of fashion at her feet,—yet, to my thinking, as one who had chosen and adapted her material with an eye of taste. A delicate cashmere was folded carelessly round her shoulders, and her little hands were gloved with a careful nicety of fit; and dangling from one finger was a toy purse of gold and pearl, in which she began searching for the change to pay her fare. I saw, too, as she investigated, an expression of perplexity, slightly tinged with the ludicrous, upon her face. I perceived at a glance the matter. She was surveying a ten-dollar note with a glance of amused vexation, and vainly turning over her little purse for the smaller change or tickets available in the situation. I leaned forward and offered, as gentlemen generally do, to take her fare and pass it forward. With a smile of apology she handed me the bill, and showed the little empty purse. "Allow me to arrange it," I said. She smiled and blushed. I passed up the ticket necessary for the occasion, returned her bill, bowed, and immediately looked another way with sedulous care.

It requires an extra amount of discretion and delicacy to make it tolerable to a true lady to become in the smallest degree indebted to a gentleman who is a stranger. I was aware that my fair *vis-à-vis* was inwardly disturbed at having inadvertently been obliged to accept from me even so small an obligation as a fare ticket; but as matters were, there was no help for it. On the whole, though I was sorry

MEEDER—CHUBB SC.

THE UMBRELLA.

"*Before a very elegant house in Fifth Avenue my unknown alighted, and the rain still continuing, there was an excuse for my still attending her up the steps.*"

for her, I could not but regard the incident as a species of good luck for myself. We rode along—perhaps each of us conscious at times of being attentively considered by the other, until the cars turned up Park Row before the Astor House; she signalled the conductor to stop, and got out. Here it was that the beneficent intentions of the fates, in causing me to bring my umbrella, were made manifest.

Just as the car started again, came one of those sudden gushes of rain with which perverse April delights to ruffle and discompose unwary passengers. It was less a decent, decorous shower, than a dash of water by the bucketful. Immediately I jumped out and stepped to the side of my gentle neighbor, begging her to allow me to hold my umbrella over her, and see her in safety across Broadway. She meant to have stopped at one or two places, she said, but it rained so she would thank me to put her into a Fifth Avenue stage. So we went together, threading our way through rushing and trampling carriages, horses, and cars,—a driving storm above, below. and around, which seemed to throw my fair princess entirely upon my protection for a few moments, till I had her safe in the up-town omnibus. As it was my route, also, I, too, entered, and by this time feeling a sort of privilege of acquaintance, arranged the fare for her, and again received a courteous and apologetic acknowledgment. Before a very elegant house in Fifth Avenue my unknown alighted, and the rain still continuing, there was an excuse for my attending her up the steps, and ringing the door-bell for her.

We were kept waiting in this position several minutes, when she very gracefully expressed her thanks for my kindness, and begged that I would walk in.

Surprised and pleased, I excused myself on plea of engagements, but presented her with my card, and said I would do myself the pleasure of calling at another time.

With a little laugh and blush she handed me a card from the tiny pearl and gold case, on which was engraved "Eva Van Arsdel," and in the corner, "*Wednesdays.*"

"We receive on Wednesdays, Mr. Henderson," she said, "and mamma will be so happy to make your acquaintance."

Here the door opened, and my fairy princess vanished from view, with a parting vision of a blush, smile, and bow, and I was left outside with the rain and the mud and the dull, commonplace grind of my daily work.

The house, as I noted it, was palatial in its aspect, Clear, large windows, which seemed a single sheet of crystal, gave a view of banks of flowering hyacinths, daffodils, crocuses, and roses, curtained in by misty falls of lace drapery. Evidently it was one of those Circean regions of retreat, where the lovely daughters of fashionable wealth in New York keep guard over an eternal lotus-eater's paradise; where they tread on enchanted carpets, move to the sound of music, and live among flowers and odors a life of blissful ignorance of toil or care.

"To what purpose," I thought to myself, "should I call there, or pursue the vision into its own regions? Æneas might as well try to follow Venus to the scented regions above Idalia, where her hundred altars forever burn, and her flowers never die."

But yet I was no wiser and no older than other men at three-and-twenty, and the little card which I had placed in my vest pocket seemed to diffuse an agreeable, electric warmth, which constantly reminded me of its presence there. I took it out and looked at it. I spelled the name over, and dwelt on every letter. There was so much positive *character* in the little lady,—such a sort of spicy, racy individuality, that the little I had seen of her was like reading the first page of an enchanting romance, and I could not repress a curiosity to go on with it. To-day was Monday; the reception day was Wednesday. Should I go?

Prudence said, "No; you are a young man with your way to make; you are self-dependent; you are poor; you have no time to spend in helping rich idle people to hunt butterflies, and string rose-leaves, and make dandelion-chains. If you set your foot over one of those enchanted thresholds, where wealth and idleness rule together, you will be bewildered, enervated, and spoiled for any really high or severe task-work; you will become an idler, a dangler; the power of sustained labor and self-denial will depart from you, and you will run like a breathless lackey after the chariot of wealth and fashion."

On the other hand, as the little bit of enchanted pasteboard gently burned in my vest pocket, it said:

"Why should you be rude? It is incumbent on you as a gentleman to respond to the invitation so frankly given. Besides, the writer who aspires to influence society must know society; and how can one know society unless one studies it? A hermit in his cell is no judge of what is going on in the world. Besides, he does not overcome the world who runs away from it, but he who meets it bravely. It is the part of a coward to be afraid of meeting wealth and luxury and indolence on their own grounds. He really conquers who can keep awake, walking straight through the enchanted ground; not he who makes a detour to get round it."

All which I had arrayed in good set terms as I rode back to my room, and went up to Bolton to look up in his library the authorities for an article I was getting out on the Domestic Life of the Ancient Greeks. Bolton had succeeded in making me feel so thoroughly at home in his library that it was to all intents and purposes as if it were my own.

As I was tumbling over the books that filled every corner, there fell out from a little niche a photograph, or rather ambrotype, such as were in use in the infancy of the art. It fell directly into my hand, so that taking it up it was impossible not to perceive what it was, and I recognized in an instant the person. It was the head of my cousin Caroline, not as I knew her now, but as I remembered her years ago, when she and I went to the Academy together.

It is almost an involuntary thing, on such occasions, to exclaim, "Who is this?" But Bolton was so very reticent a being that I found it extremely difficult to ask him a personal question. There are individuals who unite a great winning and sympathetic faculty with great reticence. They make *you* talk, they win your confidence, they are interested in you, but they ask nothing from you, and they tell you nothing. Bolton was all the while doing obliging things for me and for Jim, but he asked nothing from us; and while we felt safe in saying anything in the world before him, and while we never felt at the moment that conversation flagged, or that there was any deficiency in sympathy and good fellowship on his part, yet upon reflection we could never recall anything which let us into the interior of his own life-history.

The finding of this little memento impressed me, therefore, oddly,—as if a door had suddenly been opened into a private cabinet where I had no right to look, or an open letter which I had no right to read had been inadvertently put into my hands. I looked round on Bolton, as he sat quietly bending over a book that he was consulting, with his pen in hand and his cat at his elbow; but the question I longed to ask stuck fast in my throat, and I silently put back the picture in its place, keeping the incident to ponder in my heart. What with the one pertaining to myself, and with the thoughts suggested by this, I found myself in a disturbed state that I determined to resist by setting myself a definite task of so many pages of my article.

In the evening, when Jim came in, I recounted my adventure and showed him the card.

He surveyed it with a prolonged whistle. "Good now!" he said; "the ticket sent by the Providence Express. I see—"

"Who are these Van Arsdels, Jim?"

"Upper tens," said Jim, decisively. "Not the oldest Tens, but the second batch. Not the old Knickerbocker Vanderhoof, and Vanderhyde, and Vanderhorn set that Washy Irving tells about,—but the modern nobs. Old Van Arsdel does a smashing importing business—is worth his millions

—has five girls, all handsome—two out—two more to come out, and one strong-minded sister who has retired from the world, and isn't seen out anywhere. The one you saw was Eva; they say she's to marry Wat Sydney,—the greatest match there is going in New York. How do you say—shall you go, Wednesday?"

"Do you know them?"

"Oh, yes. Alice Van Arsdel is a splendid girl, and we are good friends, and I look in on them sometimes just to give them the light of my countenance. They are always after me to lead the German in their parties; but I've given that up. Hang it all! it's too steep on a fellow that has to work all day, with no let up, to be kept dancing till daylight with those girls. It don't pay!"

"I should think not," said I.

"You see," pursued Jim, "these girls have nothing under heaven to do, and when they've danced all night, *they* go to bed and sleep till eleven or twelve o'clock of the next day and get their rest; while we fellows have to be up and in our offices at eight o'clock next morning. The fact is, it may do for once or twice, but it knocks a fellow up pretty fast. It's a bad thing for the fellows; they get to taking wine and brandy and one thing or another to keep up, and the Devil only knows what comes of it."

"And are these Van Arsdels in that frivolous set?" said I.

"Well, you see they are not really frivolous, either; they are nice girls, well educated, graduated at the Universal Thingumbob College, where they teach girls everything that ever has been heard of, before they are seventeen. And then they have lived in Paris, and lived in Germany, and lived in Italy, and picked up all the languages; so that when they have anything to say they have a choice of four languages to say it in."

"And have they anything to say worth hearing in any of the four?" said I.

"Well, yes, now, honor bright. There's Alice Van Arsdel: she's ambitious as the devil, but, after all, a good, warmhearted girl under it—and smart! there's no doubt of that."

"And *this* lady?" said I, fingering the card.

"Eva? Well, she's had a great run; she's killing, as they say, and she's pretty—no denying that; and, really, there's a good deal to her,—like the sponge cake at the bottom of the trifle, you know, with a good smart flavor of wine and spice."

"And she's engaged to—whom did you say?"

"Wat Sydney."

"And what sort of a man is he?"

"What sort? why, he's a *rich* man; owns all sorts of things,—gold mines in California, and copper mines in Lake Superior, and salt works, and railroads. In fact, the thing is to say what he doesn't own. Immense head for business, —regular steel-trap to deal with,—has the snap of a pike."

"Pleasing prospect for a domestic companion," said I.

"Oh, as to that, I believe Wat is good-hearted enough to his own folks. They say he is very devoted to his old mother and a parcel of old maid aunts, and as he's rich, it's thought a great virtue. Nobody sings *my* praises, I notice, because I mind my mammy and Aunt Sarah. You see it takes a million-power solar microscope to bring out fellows' virtues."

"Is the gentleman handsome?"

"Well, if he was poor, nobody would think much of his looks. If he had, say, a hundred thousand or two, he would be called fair to middling in looks. As it is, the girls rave about him. He's been after Eva now for six months, and the other girls are ready to tear her eyes out. But the engagement hasn't come out yet. I think she's making up her mind to him."

"Not in love, then?"

"Well, she's been queen so long she's *blasée* and difficult, and likes to play with her fish before she lands him. But of course she *must* have him. Girls like that must have money to keep 'em up; that's the first requisite. I tell you the purple and fine linen of these princesses come to something. Now, as *rich* men go, she'd find ten worse than Wat where there's one better. Then she's been out three seasons. There's Alice just come out, and Alice is a stunner, and takes tremendously! And then there's Angeline, a handsome, spicy little witch, smarter than either, that is just fluttering, and scratching, and tearing her hair with impatience to have her turn. And behind Angeline there's Marie—she's got a confounded pair of eyes. So you see there's no help for it; Miss Eva *must* abdicate and make room for the next comer."

"Well," said I, "about this reception?"

"Oh! go, by all means," said Jim. "It will be fun. I'll go with you. You see it's Lent now, thank the stars! and so there's no dancing,—only quiet evenings and lobster salad; because, you see, we're all repenting of our sins and getting ready to go at it again after Easter. A fellow now can go to receptions, and get away in time to have a night's rest, and the girls now and then talk a little sense between whiles. They *can* talk sense when they like, though one wouldn't believe it of 'em. Well, take care of yourself, my son, and I'll take you round there on Wednesday evening." And Jim went whistling down the stairs, leaving me to finish my article on the Domestic Manners of the Greeks.

I remember that very frequently that evening, while stopping to consider how I should begin the next sentence, I unconsciously embellished the margin of my manuscript by writing "Eva, Eva, Eva Van Arsdel" in an absent-minded, mechanical way. In fact, from that time, that name began often to obtrude itself on every bit of paper when I tried my pen.

The question of going to the Wednesday evening reception was settled in the affirmative. What was to hinder my taking a look at fairy land in a purely philosophical spirit? Nothing, certainly. If she were engaged she was nothing to me,—never would be. So, clearly there was no danger.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GIRL OF OUR PERIOD.

[Letter from Eva Van Arsdel to Mrs. Courtney.]

MY DEAR FRIEND AND TEACHER:—I scarcely dare trust myself to look at the date of your kind letter. Can it really be that I have let it lie almost a year, hoping, meaning, sincerely intending to answer it, and yet doing nothing about it? Oh! my dear friend, I was a better girl while I was under your care than I am now; in those times I really *did* my duties; I never put off things, and I came *somewhere* near satisfying myself. Now, I live in a constant whirl—a whirl that never ceases. I am carried on from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, with nothing to show for it except a succession of what girls call "good times." I don't read any thing but stories; I don't study; I don't write; I don't sew; I don't draw, or play, or sing, to any real purpose. I just "go into society," as they call it. I am an idler, and the only thing I am good for is that I help to adorn a house for the entertainment of idlers; that is about all.

Now Lent has come, and I am thankful for the rest from parties and dancing; but yet Lent makes me blue, because it gives me some time to *think;* and besides that, when all this whirligig stops awhile, I feel how dizzy and tired it has made me. And then I think of all that you used to tell me about the real object of life, and all that I so sincerely resolved in my school-days that I would do and be, and I am quite in despair about myself.

It is three years since I really "came out," as the phrase goes. Up to that time I was far happier than I have been since, because I satisfied myself better. You always said, dear friend, that I was a good scholar, and faithful to every duty; and those days, when I had a definite duty for each hour, and did it well, were days when I liked myself better than now. I did *enjoy* study. I enjoyed our three years in Europe, too, for then, with much variety and many pleasures, I had regular studies; I was learning something, and did not feel that I was a mere do-nothing.

But since I have been going into company I am perfectly sick of myself. For the first year it was new to me, and I was light-headed and thought it glorious fun. It was excitement all the time—dressing, and going, and seeing, and being admired, and, well—flirting. I confess I liked it, and went into it with all my might,—parties, balls, opera, concerts all the winter in New York, and parties, balls, etc. at Newport and Saratoga in Summer. It was a sort of prolonged delirium. I didn't stop to think about anything, and lived like a butterfly, by the hour. Oh! the silly things I have said and done! I find myself blushing hot when I think of them, because, you see, I am so excitable, and sometimes am so carried away, that afterward I don't know what I may have said or done!

And now all this is coming to some end or other. This going into company can't last forever. We must be married—that's what we are for, they say; that's what all this dressing, and dancing, and flying about has got to end in. And so mamma and Aunt Maria are on thorns, to get me off their hands and well established. I have been out three seasons. I am twenty-three, and Alice has just come out, and it is expected, of course, that I retire with honor. I will not stop to tell you that I have rejected about the usual number of offers that young ladies in my position get, and I haven't seen anybody that I care a copper for.

Well, now, in this crisis, comes this Mr. Sydney, who proposed to me last Fall, and I refused point blank, simply and only because I didn't love him, which seemed to me at that time reason enough. Then mamma and Aunt Maria took up the case, and told me that I was a foolish girl to throw away such an offer: a man of good character and standing, an excellent business man, and so immensely rich—with such a splendid place at Newport, and another in New York, and a fortune like Aladdin's lamp!

I said I didn't love him, and they said I hadn't tried; that I *could* love him if I only made up my mind to, and why wouldn't I try? Then papa turned in, who very seldom has anything to say to us girls, or about any family matters, and said how delighted *he* should be to see me married to a man so capable of taking care of me. So, among them all, I agreed that I would receive his visits and attentions *as a friend,* with a view to trying to love him; and ever since I have been banked up in flowers and confectionery, and daily drifting into relations of closer and closer intimacy.

Do I find myself in love? Not a bit. Frankly, dear friend, to tell the awful truth, the thing that weighs down my heart is, that if this man were not so *rich,* I *know* I shouldn't think of him. If he were a poor young man, just beginning business, I know I should not give him a second thought; neither would mother, nor Aunt Maria, nor any of us. But here are all these worldly advantages! I confess I am dazzled by them. I am silly, I am weak, I am ambitious. I like to feel that I may have the prize of the season—the greatest offer in the market. I know I am envied and, oh, dear me! though it's naughty, yet one does like to be envied. Besides, to tell the truth, though I am not in love with him, I am not in love with anybody else. I respect him, and esteem him, and all that, in a quiet, negative sort of way, and mother and Aunt Maria say everything else will come—after marriage. Will it? Is it right? Is this the way I ought to marry?

But then, you know, I must marry somebody—that, they say, is a fixed fact. It seems to be understood that I am a sort of helpless affair, to be taken care of, and that now is my time to be disposed of; and they tell me every day that if I let this chance go, I shall regret it all my life.

Do you know I wish there were convents that one could go out of the world into? Cousin Sophia Sewell has joined the Sisters of St. John, and says she never was so happy. She does look so cheerful, and she is so busy from morning till night, and has the comfort of doing so much good to a lot of those poor little children, that I envy her.

But I cannot become a Sister. What would mamma say if she knew I even thought of it? Everybody would think me crazy. Nobody would believe how much there is in me that never comes to light, nor how miserable it makes me to be the poor, half-hearted thing that I am.

You know, dear friend, about sister Ida's peculiar course, and how very much it has vexed mamma. Yet, really and truly, I can't help respecting Ida. It seems to me she shows a real strength of principle that I lack. She went into gay society only a little while before she gave it up, and her reasons, I think, were good ones. She said it weakened her health, weakened her mind; that there was no use in it, and that it was just making her physically and morally helpless, and that she wanted to live for a purpose of her own. She wanted to go to Paris, and study for the medical profession; but neither papa, nor mamma, nor any of the family would hear of it. But Ida persisted that she would do something, and finally papa took her into his business, to manage the foreign correspondence, which she does admirably, putting all her knowledge of languages to account. He gives her the salary of a confidential clerk, and she lays it up, with the intention finally of carrying her purpose.

Ida is a good, noble woman, of a strength and independence perfectly incomprehensible to me. I can desire but I cannot do; I am weak and irresolute. People can talk me round, and do anything with me, and I cannot help myself.

Another thing makes me unhappy. Ida refused to be confirmed when I was, because, she said, confirmation was only a sham; that the girls were just as wholly worldly after as before, and that it did no earthly good.

Well, you see, I was confirmed; and, oh dear me! I was sincere, God knows. I wanted to be good—to live a higher, purer, nobler life than I have lived; and yet, after all, it is I, the child of the Church, that am living a life of folly, and show, and self-indulgence ; and it is Ida, who doubts the Church, that is living a life of industry, and energy, and self-denial.

Why is it? The world that we promise to renounce, that our sponsors promised that we should renounce—what is it, and where is it? Do those vows mean anything? if so, what? I mean to do all that I ought to; but how to know what? There's Aunt Maria, my god-mother, she did the renouncing for me at my baptism, and promised solemnly that I should abjure "the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same; that I should not follow, or be led by them;" yet she has never, that I can see, had one thought of anything else but how to secure to me just exactly those very things. That I should be first in society, be admired, followed, flattered, and make a rich, splendid marriage, has been her very heart's desire and prayer; and if I *should* renounce the vain pomp and glory of the world, really and truly, she would be utterly heart-broken. So would mamma.

I don't mean to lay all the blame on them, either. *I* have been worldly, too, and ambitious, and wanted to shine, and been only too willing to fall in with all their views.

But it really is hard for a person like me to stand alone, against my own heart, and all my relatives, particularly when I don't know exactly, in each case, what to do, and what not; where to begin to resist, and where to yield.

Ida says that it is a sin to spend nights in dancing, so that one has to lie in bed like an invalid all the next day. She says it is a sin to run down one's health for no good purpose; and yet we girls all do it—everybody does it. We all go from party to party, from concert to ball, and from ball to something else. We dance the German three or four nights a week; and then, when Sunday comes, sometimes I find that there is the Holy Communion—and then I am afraid to go. I am like the man that had not on the wedding garment.

It seems to me that our church services were made for *real* Christians—people like the primitive Christians, who made a real thing of it; they gave up everything and went down and worshiped in the catacombs, for instance. I remember seeing those catacombs where they held their church far down under ground, when I was in Rome. There would be some meaning in *such* people's using our service, but when I try to go through with it I fear to take such words on my lips. I wonder that nobody seems to feel how awful those words are, and how much they must mean, if they mean anything. It seems to me so solemn to say to God, as we do say in the communion service, "Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, *ourselves*, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto Thee"——

I see so many saying this who never seem to think of it again; and, oh, my dear friend, I have said it myself, and been no better afterward, and now, alas, I too often turn away from the holy ordinance because I feel that it is only a mockery to utter them, living as I do.

About this marriage. Mr. Sydney is not at all a religious man; he is all for this world, and I don't think I shall grow much better by it.

I wish there were somebody that could strengthen me, and help me to be my better self. I have dreams of a sort of man like King Arthur, and the Knights of the Holy Grail—a man, noble, holy, and religious. Such an one I would follow if I broke away from every one else; but, alas, no such are in our society, at least I never have met any. Yet I have it in me to love, even to death, if I found a real hero. I marked a place in a book the other day, which said:

"There is not so much difficulty in being willing to die for one, as finding one worth dying for."

I haven't, and they laugh at me as a romantic girl when I tell them what I would do if I found my ideal.

Well, I suppose you see how it's all likely to end. We drift, and drift and drift, and I shouldn't wonder if I drifted at last into this marriage. I see it all before me, just what it will be,—a wonderful wedding, that turns all New York topsy turvy—diamonds, laces, cashmeres, infinite flowers, and tuberoses of course, till one's head aches,—clang and ding, and bang and buzz;—triumphal processions to all the watering-places; tour in Europe, and then society life in New York, *ad infinitum.*

Oh, dear, if I only could get up some *enthusiasm* for him! He likes me, but he don't like the things that I like, and it is terribly slow work entertaining him—but when we are married we shan't see so much of each other, I suppose, and shall get on as other folks do. Papa and mamma hardly ever see much of each other, but I suppose they are all right. Aunt Maria says, love or no love at the beginning, it all comes to this sort of jog-trot at the end. The husband is the man that settles the bills, and takes care of the family, that's all.

Ida says—but I won't tell you what Ida says—she always makes me feel blue.

Do write me a good scolding letter; rouse me up; shame me, scold me, talk hard to me, and see if you can't make something of me. Perhaps it isn't too late.

Your affectionate bad girl, EVA.

[Letter from Mrs. Courtney to Eva Van Arsdel.]

My Dear Child:—You place me in an embarrassing position in asking me to speak on a subject, when your parents have already declared their wishes.

Nevertheless, my dear, I can but remind you that you are the child of a higher than any earthly mother, and in an affair of this moment you should take counsel of our holy Church. Take your prayer-book and read her solemn service, and see what those marriage vows are that you think of taking. Are these to be taken lightly and unadvisedly?

I recollect, when I was a young girl, we used to read Sir Charles Grandison, and one passage in the model Harriet Byron's letters I copied into my scrap-book. Speaking of one who had proposed to her, she says:

"He seems to want the mind that I would have the man blessed with that I am to vow to love and honor. I purpose whenever I marry to make a very good, and even dutiful wife; must I not vow obedience, and shall I break my marriage vow? I would not, therefore, on any consideration, marry a man whose want of knowledge might make me stagger in the performance of my duty to him; who would, perhaps, command from caprice or want of understanding what I think unreasonable to be complied with."

I quote this because I think it is old-fashioned good sense, in a respectable old English novel, worth a dozen of the modern school. To me, there is indicated in your description of Mr. Sydney, just that lack of what you would need in a husband, which would make difficult, perhaps impossible, the performance of your marriage vows. It is evident that his mind does not impress yours or control yours, and that there are no mental sympathies between you.

That a man is a good business man; that he is fitted to secure the rent or taxes of the house one lives in, and to pay one's bills, is not all. Think, my child, that this man, for whom you can "get up no enthusiasm," whose company wearies you, is the one whom you are proposing to take by the hand before God's altar, and solemnly promise that *forsaking all others*, you will *keep only unto* him, so long as you both shall live, to love, to honor, and to obey. Can you do it?

You say you can get up no enthusiasm for this man, yet you have a conception of a man for whom you could leave all things; whom you *could* love unto the death.

It is out of just such marriages, made by girls with just such hearts as yours, that come all these troubles that are bringing holy marriage into disrepute in our times. A woman marries, thoughtlessly and unadvisedly, a man whom she consciously does not love, hoping that she *shall* love him, or that she shall do as well as others do; then by accident or chance she is thrown into the society of the very one whom she could have loved with enthusiasm, and married for himself alone. The modern school of novels is full of these wretched stories, and people now are clamoring for free divorce, to get out of marriages that they never ought to have fallen into.

Amid all this confusion the Church stands from age to age and teaches. She shows you exactly what you are to promise; she warns you against promising lightly, or unadvisedly, and I can only refer my dear child to her mother's lessons. Marriage vows, like confirmation vows, are recorded in Heaven, and must not be broken.

The time for reflection is before they are made. Instead of clamoring for free divorce, as a purifier of marriage, all Christians should purify it as the church recommends, by the great care with which they enter into it. That is my doctrine, my love. I am a good old English Church-woman, and don't believe in any modern theories. The teachings of the prayer-book are enough for me. I know that, in spite of them all, there are thoughtless confirmation vows and marriage vows daily uttered in our church, but it is not for want of clear and solemn instruction. But you, my love, with your conscientiousness, and good sense, and really noble nature, will I am sure act worthily of yourself in this matter.

Another consideration I suggest to you. This man, whom I suppose to be a worthy and excellent man, has his rights. He has the right to the whole heart of the woman he marries —to whom at the altar he gives himself and all which he possesses. A woman who has what you call an enthusiasm for a man, can do much with him. She can bear with his faults; she can inspire and lead him; she can raise him in the scale of being. But without this enthusiasm, this real love, she can do nothing of the kind; it is a thing that cannot be dissembled, or affected. And after marriage, the man who does not find this in his wife, has the best reason to think himself defrauded.

Now, if for the sake of possessing a man's worldly goods, his advantages of fortune and station, you take that relation when you really are unable to give him your heart, you act dishonestly. You take and enjoy what you cannot pay for. Not only that, but you deprive him through all his life of the blessing of being really loved, which he might obtain with some other woman.

The fact is, you have been highly cultivated in certain departments; your tastes would lead you into the world of art and literature. He has been devoted to business, and in that way has amassed a fortune, but he has no knowledge, and no habits that would prepare him to sympathise with you.

I am not here undervaluing the worth of those strong, sterling qualities which belongs to an upright and vigorous man. There are many women who are impressed by just that sort of power, and admire it in men, as they do physical strength and courage; it dazzles their imagination, and they fall in love accordingly. You happen to have another kind of fancy—he is not of your sort.

But there are doubtless women whom he would fully satisfy; who would find him a delightful companion; who, in short, would be exactly what you are not, in love with him. My dear, men need wives who are *in love* with them. Simple tolerance is not enough to stand the strain of married life, and to marry when you cannot truly love is to commit an act of dishonesty and injustice. Remembering, therefore, that you are about to do what never can be undone, and what must make or mar your whole future, I speak this in all sincere plainness, because I am, and ever must be,

Your affectionate and true friend,

M. COURTNEY.

[Ida Van Arsdel to Mrs. Courtney.]

My Dear Friend:—I am glad you have written as you have to Eva. It is perfectly inexplicable to me that a girl of her general strength of character can be so undecided. Eva has been deteriorating ever since she came from Europe. This fashionable life is to mind and body just like a hotbed to tender plants in summer, it wilts everything down. Eva was a good scholar and I had great hopes of her. She had a warm heart; she has really high and noble aspirations, but for two or three years past she has done nothing but run down her health and fritter away her mind on trifles. She is not half the girl she was at school, either mentally or physically, and I am grieved and indignant at the waste. Her only chance of escape and salvation is to marry a true man.

But when people set out as a first requisite that the man *must* be rich, how many are the chances of finding that?

The rich men of America are either rich men's sons, who, from all I have seen of them, are poor trash enough, or business men, who have made wealth by their own exertions. But how few there are who make money, who do not sacrifice their spiritual and nobler natures to do it? How few with whom the making of money is not the beginning, middle, and end of life, and how little can such men do to uphold and elevate the moral nature of a wife!

Mr. Sydney is a man, heart, soul, and strength, interested in that mighty game of chance and skill by which, in America, money is made. He is a railroad king—a prince of stocks—a man going with a forty thousand steam power through New York waters. He wants a wife—a brilliant, attractive, showy, dressy wife, to keep his house and ornament his home; and he is at Eva's feet, because she is, on the whole, the belle of his circle. He chooses *en Grand Seigneur*, and undoubtedly he is as much in love with her as such a kind of man can be. But, in fact, he knows nothing about Eva; he does not even know enough to know the dangers of marrying such a woman. With all her fire, and all her softness, all her restless enthusiasms, her longings and aspirations and inconsistencies, what could he do with her? The man who marries Eva ought to know her better than she knows herself, but this man never would know her, if they lived together an age. He has no traits by which to estimate her, and the very best result of the marriage will be a mutual *laisser aller* of two people who agree not to quarrel, and to go their own separate ways, he to his world, and she to hers; and this sort of thing is what is called in our times a good marriage.

I am out of patience with Eva for her very virtues. It is her instinct to want to please and to comply, and because mamma and aunt Maria have set their hearts on this match, and because she is empty-hearted and tired, and *ennuyeuse*, she has no strength to stand up for herself. Her very conscientiousness weakens her; she doubts, but does not decide. She has just enough of everything in her nature to get her into trouble, and not enough to get her out. A phrenologist told her she needed destructiveness. Well, she does. The pain-giving power is a most necessary part of a well organized human being. Nobody can ever do anything without the courage to be disagreeable at times, which I have plenty of. They do not try to control me, or enslave me. Why? Because I made my declaration of independence, and planted my guns, and got ready for war. This is dreadfully unamiable, but it did the thing; it secured peace; I am let alone. I am allowed my freedom, but everybody interferes with Eva. She is conquered territory—has no rights that anybody is bound to respect. It provokes me.

As to the religious part of your letter, dear friend, I thank you for it. I cannot see things as you do, however. To me it appears that in our day everything has got to be brought to the simple test of, What good does it do? If baptism, confirmation and eucharist make unworldly, self-denying, self-sacrificing people just as certainly as petunia-seed make petunias, why, then, nobody will have any doubt of their necessity, and the church will have its throngs. I don't see now that they do. Go into a fashionable party I have been in, and watch the girls, and see if you can tell who have been baptized and confirmed, and who have not.

The first Christians carried Christianity over all the pomp and power of the world simply by the unworldly life they lived. Nobody doubted where the true church was in those days. Christians were a set of people like nobody else in the world, and whenever and wherever and by whatever means that *kind of character* that they had is created, it will have power.

I like the Episcopal Church, but I cannot call it *the* church till I see evidences that it answers practically the purpose of a church better than any other. For my part I go to hear a dreadfully heretical preacher on Sunday, who lectures in a black-coat in a hall, simply because he talks to me on points of duty, which I am anxious to hear discussed. Eva, poor child, wears down her health and strength with night after night in society, and spends all her money on dress; doing no earthly thing for any living creature, except in the pleasure-giving way, like a bird or a flower, and then is shocked and worried about me because I read scientific works on Sunday.

I make conscience of good health, early hours, thick shoes, and mental and bodily drill, and subjection. Please God, I mean to do something worthy a Christian woman before I die, and to open a path through which weaker women shall walk out of this morass of fashion-slavery, and subjection, where they flounder now. I take for my motto that sentence from one of Dr. Johnson's allegories you once read to us: "No life pleasing to God that is not useful to man." I hope, my dear friend, I shall keep the spirit of Christ, though I wander from the letter. Such words as you have spoken to me, however, can never come amiss. Perhaps when I am old and wiser, like many another self-confident wanderer, I may be glad to come back to my mother's house, and then, perhaps, I shall be a stiff little church-woman. At all events I shall always be your loving and grateful pupil. IDA.

[Eva Van Arsdel to Isabel Convers.]

My Dear Belle: Thanks for your kind letter with all its congratulations and inquiries,—for though as yet I have no occasion for congratulation, and nothing to answer to inquiry, I appreciate these all the same.

No—Belle, the "old sixpence" is not gone yet,—you will have to keep to your friend a while longer. I am not engaged, and you have full liberty to contradict that report everywhere and anywhere.

Mr. Sydney is, of course, very polite, and very devoted, very much a friend of the family and all that, but I am *not* engaged to him, and you need never believe any such thing of me till you hear it directly, under my own hand and seal.

There have been a lot of engagements in our set lately. Lottie Trevillian is going to marry Sim Carrington, and Bessie Somers has at last decided to take old Watkins—though he is twenty-five years older than she,—and then there's Cousin Maria Elmore has just turned a splendid affair with young Livingstone, really the most brilliant match of the winter. I am positively ashamed of myself, under these circumstances, to be sitting still, and unable to report progress. My old infelicity in making up my mind seems to haunt me, and I dare say I shall live to be a dreadful example.

By the by, I have had a curious sort of an adventure lately. You know when I was up at Englewood visiting you last summer, I was just raving over those sonnets on Italy, which appeared in the "*Milky Way*" over the signature of "X." You remember those verses on "Fra Angelico" and the "Campanile," don't you? Well, I have found out who this X is. It's a Mr. Henderson that is now in New York, engaged on the staff of "*The Great Democracy*." We girls have noticed him once or twice walking with Jim Fellows—(you remember Jim;) Jim says he is a perfect hermit, devoted to study and writing, and never goes into society. Well, wasn't it odd that the fates should have thrown this hermit just in my way?

The other morning I came over from Brooklyn, where I had been spending three days with Sophia, and when I got into the car who should I see but this identical Mr. Henderson right opposite to me. I took a quiet note of him, between whiles thinking of one or two lines in his sonnet. He is nice-looking, manly, that is, and has fine dark eyes. Well, do you know, the most provoking thing, when I came to pay my fare I found that I had no tickets nor small change—what could have possessed me to come so I can't imagine, and mamma makes it all the worse by saying it's just like me. However, he interposed and arranged it for me in the nicest and quietest way in the world. I was going up to call at Jennings', the other side of the Astor House, to see about my laces, but by the time we got there, there came on such a rain as was perfectly dreadful. My dear, it was one of those shocking affairs peculiar to New York, which really come down by the bucketful, and I had nothing for it but to cross Broadway as quick as I could to catch a Fifth Avenue omnibus, and let my lace go till a more convenient season.

Well, as I stepped out into the storm, who should I find quite beside me but this gentleman, with his umbrella over my head. I could see at the moment that it had one of those quaint handles that they carve in Dieppe. We were among cars, and policemen, and trampling horses, and so on, but he got me safe into an up-town omnibus, and I felt so much obliged to him.

I supposed, of course, that there it might end, but, would you believe it, quite to my surprise, he got into the omnibus too! "After all," I said to myself, "perhaps his route lies up town like mine." He wasn't in the least presuming, and sat there very quietly, only saying, "Permit me," as he passed up a ticket for me when the fare was to be paid, so saving me that odious necessity of making change with my great awkward bill. I was mortified enough—but knowing who it was, had a sort of internal hope that one day I could apologize and make it all right, for, my dear, I determined on the spot that we would invite him to our receptions, and get Jim Fellows to make him come. I think there is no test of a gentleman like the manner in which he does a favor for a stranger lady whom the fates cast upon his protection. So many would be insufferably presuming and assuming—he was just right, so quiet, so simple, so unpretentious, yet so considerate.

He rode on very quietly till we were opposite our house, and then was on duty again with his umbrella, up to the very door of the house, and holding it over me while we were waiting. I couldn't help expressing my thanks, and asking him to walk in; but he excused himself, giving his card, and saying he would be happy to call and inquire after my health, etc.; and I gave him mine, with our Wednesday receptions on it, and told him how pleased mamma would be to have him call. It was all I could do to avoid calling him by his name, and letting him see how much I knew about him; but I didn't. It was rather awkward, wasn't it?

Now, I wonder if he will call on Wednesdays. Jim Fellows says he is so shy, and never goes out; and you know if there is anything that can't be had, that is the thing one is wild to get; so mamma and all of us are quite excited, and wondering if he will come. Mamma is all anxiety to apologize, and all that, for the trouble I have given him.

It's rather funny, isn't it—an adventure in prosaic old New York? I dare say, now, he has forgotten all about it, and never will think of coming into such a trifling set as we girls are. Well, I will let you know if he comes.

Ever your affectionate EVA.

CHAPTER XVII.

I AM INTRODUCED INTO SOCIETY.

BOLTON and I were sitting, up to our ears in new books which had been accumulating for notice for days past, and which I was turning over and dipping into here and there with the jaded, half-disgusted air of a child worn out by the profusion of a Thanksgiving dinner.

"I feel perfectly savage," I said. "What a never-ending harvest of trash! Two, or at the most, three tolerable ideas, turned and twisted in some novel device, got up in large print, with wide margins—and, behold, a modern book! I would like to be a black frost and nip them all in a night!"

"Your dinner didn't agree with you, apparently," said Bolton, as he looked up from a new scientific work he was patiently analyzing, making careful notes along the margin; "however, turn those books over to Jim, who understands the hop, skip, and jump style of criticism. Jim has about a dozen or two of blank forms that only need the name of the book and publisher inserted, and the work is done."

"What a perfect farce," said I.

"The notices are as good as the books," said Bolton. "Something has to be said to satisfy the publishers and do the handsome thing by them; and the usual string of commendatory phrases and trite criticism, which mean nothing in particular, I presume imposes upon nobody. It is merely a form of announcing that such and such wares are in the market. I fancy they have very little influence on public opinion."

"But do you think," said I, "that there is any hope of a just school of book criticism—something that should be a real guide to buyers and readers, and a real instruction to writers?"

"That is a large question," said Bolton, "and a matter beset with serious difficulties. While books are a matter of commerce and trade; while magazines which criticise books are the property of booksellers, and newspapers depend on them for advertising patronage, it is too much to expect of human nature, that we should always get wholly honest, unbiassed opinions. Then, again, there is the haste, and rush, and hurry of our times, the amount of literary driftwood that is all the while accumulating! Editors and critics are but mortal men, and men kept, as a general thing, in the last agonies of weariness and boredom. There is not, for the most part, sensibility enough left to enable them to read through or enter into the purport of one book in a hundred; yet, for all this, you do observe here and there in the columns of our best papers carefully studied and seriously written critiques on books; these are hopeful signs. They show a conscientious effort on the part of the writers to enter into the spirit of the work, and to give their readers a fair account of it; and, if I mistake not, the number of such is on the increase."

"Well," said I, "do you suppose there is any prospect or possibility of a *constructive* school of criticism—honest, yet kindly and sympathetic, that shall lead young authors into right methods of perfecting themselves?"

"We have a long while to wait before that comes," said Bolton. "Who is appreciative and many-sided enough to guide the first efforts of genius just coming to consciousness? How many could profitably have advised Hawthorne when his peculiar Rembrandt style was just forming? As a race, we Anglo-Saxons are so self-sphered that we lack the power to enter into the individuality of another mind, and give profitable advice for its direction.

"English criticism has generally been unappreciative and brutal; it has dissected butterflies and humming-birds with mallet and cleaver—witness the review that murdered Keats, and witness in the letters of Charlotte Bronté the perplexity into which sensitive, conscientious genius was thrown by obstreperous, conflicting criticism. The most helpful, because most appreciative reviews, she says, came to her from France."

"I suppose," said I, "that it is the dramatic element in the French character that fits them to be good literary critics. They can enter into another individuality. One would think it a matter of mere common sense, that in order to criticise justly you must put yourself for the time being as nearly as possible at the author's point of sight; form a sympathetic estimate of what he is striving to do, and then you can tell how nearly he attains his purpose. Of this delicate constructive criticism, we have as yet, it seems to me, almost no specimens in the English language. St. Beuve has left models in French, in this respect, which we should do well to imitate. We Americans are a good-natured set, and our criticism inclines to comity and good-fellowship far more than to the rude bluntness of our English neighbors; and if we could make this discriminating, as well as urbane, we should get about the right thing."

Our conversation was interrupted here by Jim Fellows, who came thundering up-stairs, singing at the top of his lungs—

"If an engine meet an engine
  Coming round a curve,—
If it smash both train and tender,
  What does it deserve?
Not a penny—paid to any,
  So far as I observe— "

"Gracious, Jim! what a noise!" said I, as he entered the room with a perfect war-whoop on the chorus.

"Bless my soul, man, why arn't you dressing? Arn't you going up to the garden of Eden with me to-night, to see the woman, and the serpent,and all that?" he said, collaring me without ceremony. "Come away to your bower, and curl your nut-brown hair; for

"'Time rolls along,
Nor waits for mortal care or bliss,
We'll take our staff and travel on,
Till we arrive where the pretty gals is."

And thus singing, Jim whirled me down the stairs, and tumbled me into my room, and went into his, where I heard him accompanying his toilet operations with very loud selections from the last comic opera, beating time with his hair-brush in a bewildering manner.

Jim was certainly a natural curiosity in respect to the eternal, unceasing vivacity of his animal spirits, which were in a state of effervescence from morning to night, frothing out in some odd freak of drollery or buffoonery. There was not the smallest use in trying remonstrance or putting on a sober face: his persistence, and the endless variety of his queer conceits, would have overcome the gravity of the saddest hermit that ever wore sackcloth and ashes.

Bolton had become accustomed to see him bursting into his room at all hours, with a breeze which fluttered all his papers; and generally sat back resignedly in his chair, and laughed in helpless good-nature, no matter how untimely the interruption. "Oh, it's Jim!" he would say, in tones of comic resignation. "It's no use; he must have his fling!"

"Time's up," said Jim, drumming on my door with his hair-brush when his toilet was completed. "Come on, my boy, 'Let us haste to Kelvyn Grove.'"

I opened my door, and Jim took a paternal survey of me from neck-cloth to boot-toe, turning me round and inspecting me on all sides, as if I had been a Sunday-school boy, dressed for an exhibition.

"Those girls have such confounded sharp eyes," he remarked, "a fellow needs to be well got up. Yes, you'll do; and you're not bad looking, Hal, either, all things considered," he added, encouragingly. "Come along. I've got lots of things to make a sensation with among the girls to-night."

"What, for example?"

"Oh, I've been investigating round, and know sundry little interesting particulars as to the new engagement just declared. I know when the engagement ring was got, and what it cost, and where the bride's jewels are making up, and what they are to be--all secrets, you understand, of the very deadest door-nail kind. But Jim knows them! Oh, yes!—you'll see the flutter I'll make in the roost to-night! I say, if you want to cultivate your acquaintance with Miss Eva there, I'll draw all the rest off, and keep 'em so wide awake round me that they'll never think what becomes of you."

I must confess to feeling not a little nervous in the prospect of my initiation into society, and regarding with a secret envy the dashing, easy assurance of Jim. I called him in my heart something of a coxcomb, but it was with a half-amused tolerance that I allowed him to patronize me.

The experience of a young man who feels that he has his own way in life to make, and all whose surroundings must necessarily be of the most rigid economy, when he enters the modern sphere of young ladyhood, is like a sudden change from Nova Zembla to the tropics. His is a world of patient toil, of hard effort, of dry drudgery, of severe economies; while our young American princesses, his social equals, whose society fascinates him, to whose acquaintance he aspires, live like the fowls of the air or the lilies of the field, without a thought of labor, or a care, or serious responsibility of any kind. They are "gay creatures of the element," living to enjoy and to amuse themselves, to be fostered, sheltered, dressed, petted, and made to have "good times" generally. In England, there are *men* born to just this life and position,—hereditary possessors of wealth, ease, and leisure, and therefore able to be hereditary idlers and triflers—to live simply to spend and to enjoy. But in America, where there are no laws to keep fortunes in certain families, fortunes, as a general rule, must be *made* by their possessors, and young men must make them. The young, unmarried women, therefore, remain the only aristocracy privileged to live in idleness, and wait for their duties to come to them.

The house to which I was introduced that night was one of those New York palaces that are furnished with eclectic taste, after a survey of all that Europe has to give. The suites of rooms opened into each other in charming vista, and the walls were hung with the choicest paintings. It was evident that cultured skill and appreciation had presided over the collection of the endless objects of artistic elegance and *vertu* which adorned every apartment: it was no vulgar display of wealth, but a selection which must have been the result of study and care.

Jim, acting the part of master of ceremonies, duly presented me to Mr. and Mrs. Van Arsdel, and the bevy of young ladies, whose eyes twinkled with dangerous merriment as I made my bow to them.

Mr. Van Arsdel was what one so often sees in these palaces, a simple, quiet, silent man, not knowing or caring a bodle about any of the wonders of art and luxury with which his womankind have surrounded him, and not pretending in the least to comprehend them; but quietly indulgent to the tastes and whims of wife and daughters, of whose superior culture he is secretly not a little proud.

In Wall street Mr. Van Arsdel held up his head, and found much to say; his air was Napoleonic; in short, *there* his foot was on his native heath. But in his own house, among Cuyps, and Frères, and Rembrandts, and Fra Angelicos, with a set of polyglot daughters who spake with tongues, he walked softly, and expressed himself with humility, like a sensible man.

Mrs. Van Arsdel had been a beauty from her youth; had come of a family renowned for belles, and was still a very handsome woman, and, of course, versed in all those gentle diplomacies, and ineffable arts and crafts, by which the sons of Adam are immediately swayed and governed.

Never was stately swan sailing at the head of a brood of fair young cygnets more competent to leadership than she to marshal her troop of bright, handsome daughters through the straits of girlhood to the high places of matrimony. She read, and classified, and ticketed, at a glance, every young man presented to her, yet there was not a shade of the scrutiny dimming the bland cordiality of her reception. She was winning, warming, and charming; fully alive to the éclat of a train of admirers, and to the desirableness of keeping up a brilliant court.

"Mr. Henderson," she said, with a rich mellow laugh, "I tell Eva there is some advantage, first or last, in almost everything. One of her scatter-brained tricks has brought us the pleasure of your acquaintance."

"Mamma has such a shocking way of generalizing about us girls," said Eva; "if we once are caught doing a thing she talks as if we made a regular habit of it. Now, I have come over from Brooklyn hundreds of times, and never failed to have the proper change in my purse till this once."

"I am to regard it, then, as a special piece of good fortune, sent to *me?*" said I, drawing somewhat nearer, as Mrs. Van Arsdel turned to receive some new arrivals.

I had occasion this evening to admire the facility with which Jim fulfilled his promise of absorbing to himself the attention of the young hostesses, and leaving me the advantage of a tête-à-tête with my new acquaintance. I could see him at this moment, seated by Miss Alice, a splendid, brilliant brunette, while the two pretty younger sisters, not yet supposed to be out, were seated on ottomans, and all in various stages of intense excitement. I could hear:

"Oh, Mr. Fellows, now, you *must* tell us! indeed I am quite wild to know! how *could* you find it out?" in various, eager tones. Jim, of course, was as fully aware of the importance of a dramatic mystery as a modern novel-writer, and pursued a course of most obdurate provocation, letting out only such glimpses and sparkles of the desired intelligence as served to inflame curiosity, and hold the attention of the circle concentrated upon himself.

"I think you are perfectly dreadful! Oh, Mr. Fellows, it really is a shame that you don't tell us, really now I shall break friendship with you,"—the tones here became threatening. Then Jim struck a tragic attitude, and laid his hand on his heart, and declared that he was a martyr, and there was more laughing and such a chatter, and confusion of tongues, that nothing definite could be made out.

The length of time that young people, from eighteen to twenty, and even upward, can keep themselves in ecstacies of excitement with such small stock of real things of any sort to say, is something that invariably astonishes old and sober people, who have forgotten that they once were in this happy age, when everything made them laugh. There was soon noise enough, and absorption enough, in the little circle,—widened by the coming in of one or two other young men—to leave me quite unnoticed, and in the background. This was not to be regretted, as Miss Eva assumed with a charming ease and self-possession that rôle of hospitality and entertainment, for which I fancy our young American princess has an especial talent.

"Do you know, Mr. Henderson," she said, "we scarcely expected you, as we hear you never go out."

"Indeed!" said I.

"Oh, yes! your friend, Mr. Fellows there, has presented you to us in most formidable aspects—such a Diogenes! so devoted to your tub! no getting you out on any terms!"

"I'm sure," I answered, laughing, "I wasn't aware that I had ever had the honor of being discussed in your circle at all."

"Oh, indeed, Mr. Henderson, you gentlemen who make confidants of the public are often known much better than you know. I have felt acquainted with many of your thoughts for a long while."

What writer is insensible to such flattery as this? especially from the prettiest of lips. I confess I took to this sort of thing kindly, and was ready if possible for a little more of it. I began to say to myself how charming it was to find beauty and fashion united with correct literary taste.

"Now," she said, as the rooms were rapidly filling, "let me show you if I have not been able to read aright some of your tastes. Come into what I call my 'Italy.'" She lifted a *portière* and we stepped into a charming little boudoir, furnished in blue satin, whose walls were finished in compartments, in each of which hung a copy of one of Fra Angelico's Angels. Over the white marble mantel was a superb copy of "The Paradise." "There," she said, turning to me, with a frank smile, "am I not right?"

"You are, indeed, Miss Van Arsdel. What beautiful copies! They take me back to Florence."

"See here," she added, opening a velvet case, "here is something that I know you noticed, for I read what you thought of it."

It was an exquisite copy of that rarest little gem of Fra Angelico's painting, "The Death-Bed of the Virgin Mary," —in time past the theme of some of my verses, which Miss Van Arsdel thus graciously recalled.

"Do you know," she said, "the only drawback when one reads poems that exactly express what one would like to say, is that it makes us envious; one thinks, why couldn't *I* have said it thus?"

"Miss Van Arsdel," said I, "do you remember the lines of Longfellow: 'I shot an arrow through the air?'"

"What are they?' she said.

I repeated:

"I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

"I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of song?

"Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow, still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend."

"Do you know," I said, "that this expresses exactly what a poet wants? It is not admiration, it is sympathy. Poems are test papers, put in the atmosphere of life to detect this property; we can find by them who really *feel* with us; and those who do, whether near or far, are *friends*. The making of friends is the most precious gift for which poetic utterance is given."

"I don't think," said she, "you should say '*make* friends' —friends are *discovered*, rather than made. There are people who are in their own nature friends, only they don't know each other; but certain things like poetry, music, and painting, are like the free-mason's signs—they reveal the initiated to each other."

And so on we went, deliciously talking and ranging through portfolios of engravings that took us through past days; rambling through all our sunny Italian life, up the Campanile, through the old Duomo; sauntering through the ilexes of the Boboli Garden; comparing notes on the pictures in the Pitti and the Belle Arte—in short, we had one of that blessed kind of times which come when two enthusiasts go back together over the brightest and sunniest passages of their experience.

My head swam; a golden haze was around me, and I was not quite certain whether I was in the body or not. It seemed to me that we two must always have known each other, so very simple and natural did it seem for us to talk together, and to understand one another. "But," she said, suddenly checking herself, "if we get to going on all these things there is no end to it, and I promised sister Ida that I would present you in her study to-night."

"Seems to me it is so *very* delightful here!" said I, deprecatingly, not well pleased to come out of my dream.

"Ah, but you don't know, Mr. Henderson, this proposed presentation is a special honor. I assure you that this is a distinction that is almost never accorded to any of our callers; you must know sister Ida has retired from the world, and given herself up to the pursuit of wisdom, and it is the rarest thing on earth that she vouchsafes to care for seeing any one."

"I should be only too much flattered," said I, as I followed my guide across a hall, and into a little plainly furnished study, whose air of rigid simplicity contrasted with the luxury of all the other parts of the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE YOUNG LADY PHILOSOPHER.

SEATED, reading by a shaded study-lamp, was a young woman of what I should call the Jeanie Deans order—one whose whole personal appearance indicated that sort of compact, efficient union of energy and simplicity characteristic of the Scottish heroine. Her hair, of a pretty curly brown, was cut short, *à la* Rosa Bonheur; her complexion glowed with a sort of a wholesome firmness, indicative of high health; her large, serious grey eyes had an expression of quiet resolution, united with careful observation. Her figure inclined to the short, stout and well-compacted order, which gave promise of vitality and power of endurance—without pretensions to beauty. There was a wholesome, thoughtful cheerfulness and good-humor in the expression of the face that made it decidedly prepossessing and attractive.

The furniture of the room, too, was in contrast with all the other appointments of the house. It was old and worn, and of that primitive kind that betokened honest and respectable mediocrity. There was a quaint, old-fashioned writing-desk, with its array of drawers and pigeon-holes; there were old slippery wooden arm-chairs, unrelieved by cushions; while the floor was bare, excepting in front of the fire, where it was covered by a large square of what New England housekeepers call rag-carpet. The room, in fact, was furnished like the sitting-room of an old New England farm-house. A cheerful, bountiful wood-fire, burning on a pair of old-fashioned brass andirons, added to the resemblance.

"You see, Mr. Henderson," said Miss Eva, when I had been introduced and seated, "you are now in the presence of Miss Van Arsdel proper. This room is Papa's and Ida's joint territory, where their own tastes and notions have supreme sway; and so you see it is sacred to the memories of the past. There is all the old furniture that belonged to papa when he was married. Poor man! he has been pushed out into grandeur, step by step, till this was all that remained, and Ida opened an asylum for it. Do you know, this is the only room in the house Papa cares much for. You see, he was born on a farm, dear gentleman, and he has an inveterate yearning after primitive simplicity—huckleberries and milk, you know, and all that. Don't this look like the old 'keeping-room' style?"

"Yes," said I, "it looks like *home*. I know rooms just like it."

"But I *like* these old primitive things," said Ida. "I like hardness and simplicity. I am sick to death of softness and perfumed cushions and ease. We women are sweltered under down beds, and smothered with luxuries, in our modern day, till all the life dies out of us. *I* want to live while I live, and to keep myself in such trim that I can *do* something—and I won't pet myself nor *be* petted."

"There," said Eva, laughing, "blood will tell; there's the old Puritan broken loose in Ida. She don't believe any of their doctrines, but she goes on their track. She's just like a St. Bernard dog that she brought home once. As soon as snow came, he was wild to run out and search in it, and used to run off whole days in the woods, just because his ancestors were trained to hunt travelers. Ida is as bent on testifying and going against the world as any old Covenanter."

"The world needs going against," said Ida. "By the by, Mr. Henderson, you must allow me to thank you for your article on the 'Woman of our Times,' in the *Milky Way*. It is bracing, and will do good."

"And I," said Eva, kindling with a sort of flame-like vivacity, "have been perfectly dying to tell you that you don't *know* us fashionable girls, and that we are not, after all, such poor trash as you seem to think. All the out-of-jointness of society is not our fault."

"I protest, Miss Eva," said I, astonished at the eagerness of her manner. "I'm sure I don't know what I have said to give that impression."

"Oh, I dare say not. You have only used the good stock phrases and said the usual things. You reformers and moralists, and all that, have got a way of setting us girls down as sinners as a matter of course, so that you never think when you do it. The 'Dolls of fashion,' the 'Butterflies,' &c., &c., are used to point the moral and adorn the tale. The girl of the period is the scapegoat for all the naughty things going. Now, I say the girl of the period isn't a particle worse than the boy of the period; and I think reformers had better turn their attention to him."

"But I don't remember," said I, astonished and confused at the sudden vivacity of this attack, "that I said anything."

"Oh, yes, but I do. You see it's the party that's hit that knows when a blow is struck. You see, Mr. Henderson, it isn't merely you, but everybody, from the London *Spectator* down, when they get on their preaching-caps, and come forth to right the wrongs of society, begin about *us*—our dressiness, our expensiveness, our idleness, our extravagance, our heartlessness. The men, poor, dear creatures, are led astray and ruined by *us*. It's the old story of Adam: 'The woman beguiled me.'"

"You see," said Ida, laughing, "Eva's conscience troubles her; that's why she's so sensitive."

"Well, that's the truth," said Eva. "I'm *in* the world, and Ida has gone out of it; and so she can sit by, all serene, when hits are made at us, and say, 'I told you so.' But, you see, *I* am *in*, and am all the while sure that about half what thy say of us is true, and that makes me sensitive when they say too much. But, I insist upon it, it isn't *all* true; and if it is, it isn't our fault. We are in the world just as we are in a railroad-car, and we can't help its carrying us on, even if we don't like the places it takes us through."

"Unless you get out of it," said Ida.

"Yes; but it takes courage to get out alone, at some desolate way station, and set up your tent, and make your way, and have everybody in the cars screaming remonstrances or laughing at you. Ida has the courage to do it, but I haven't. I don't believe in myself enough to do it, so I stay in the car, and wish I didn't, and wish we were all going a better way than we do."

"No," said Ida; "women are brought up in a way to smother all the life out of them. All literature from the earliest ages teaches them that it is graceful to be pretty and helpless; they aspire to be superficial and showy. They are directed to look on themselves as flowers—

"Gay without toil, and lovely without art,
They spring to cheer the sense, and warm the heart;
Nor blush, my fair, to be compared to these—
Your best, your noblest mission, is *to please*."

"Well," said Eva, flushing, "wasn't it a *man* that wrote that? and don't they always misunderstand us? We *are* soft—we *are* weak—we *do* love beauty, and ease, and comfort; but there is a something in us more than they give us credit for. Where is that place in Carlyle?" she said, rising with a hasty impulse, and taking down a volume, and running rapidly over the leaves—"Oh, here it is!" and she read with energy from Carlyle's *Hero Worship:*

> 'It is a calumny to say that men are nerved to heroic action by ease, hope of pleasure, recompense—sugar-plums of any kind—in this world or the next. In the meanest mortal there is something nobler. The poor, swearing soldier, hired to be shot, has his honor of a soldier different from drill, regulations, and the shilling a day. It is not to taste sweet things, but to *do* noble and true things, and vindicate himself under God's heaven as a God-made man, that the poorest son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, and the dullest drudge kindles into a hero.
>
> 'They wrong man greatly who say he is to be seduced by ease. Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death, are *allurements* that act on the heart of man. Kindle the inner genial life of him, and you have a flame that burns up all lower considerations.'

"Now," she said, her face glowing, and bringing down her little fist with emphasis, "*that* is true of *women* as well as men. They wrong woman greatly who say she is to be seduced by ease. Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death, are *allurements* that act on the heart of woman. Now, Mr. Henderson, every woman that *is* a woman, feels this in the depths of her heart, and it is this feeling suppressed that is at the bottom of a great deal of unhappiness in woman's life. You men have your chance to express it—that is your great good fortune. You are called to be heroes—your hour comes—but we are buried under eternal commonplaces and trifles."

"Yet, Miss Eva," said I, "I don't think we are so very much better off than you. The life of the great body of *men* is a succession of mere ignoble drudgeries, with nothing great or inspiring. Unless we learn to ennoble the common-place by a heroic spirit, most of us must pass through life with no expression of this aspiration; and I think that more women succeed in doing this than men—in fact, I think it is the distinctive prerogative of woman to idealize life by shedding an ennobling spirit upon its very trifles."

"That is true," she said, frankly; "but I confess it never occurred to me; yet don't you think it harder to be heroic in every-day affairs?"

"Certainly; but those that can inspire common-place drudgery with noble and heroic meanings are the true heroes. There was a carpenter once in Nazareth who worked thirty years quietly at his bench; but who doubts that every stroke of that work was inspired and heroic, as much as the three public years that followed? And there are women, like him, toiling in poverty—hard-working wives, long-suffering mothers, whose every breath is heroic. There *can* be no common-place where such noble creatures live and suffer."

"Yes, Mr. Henderson," said Ida, "heroism can be in any life that is a *work*-life—any life which includes energy and self-denial. But fashionable life is based on mere love of ease. All it seeks is pleasurable sensation and absence of care and trouble, and it starves this heroic capability; and that is the reason, as Eva says, why there is so much repressed unhappiness in women. It is the hunger of starving faculties. What are all these girls and women looking for? Amusement, excitement. What do they dread more than anything? Effort, industry, self-denial. Not one of them can read a serious book through—not because they are not able, but because it takes an effort. They read nothing but serial stories, and if there is much thought in them, they skip it, to get at the story. All the education they get in schools lies idle; they do nothing with it, as a general thing. They neither read, write, nor speak their French, Italian, or German—and what is the use of having got them? Men study languages as a key to literature, and use literature for some purpose; women study only to forget. It does not take four languages and all the ologies to enable them to dance the German and compose new styles of trimming. They might do all they do equally as well without these expensive educations as with——"

"There now, you have got sister Ida on her pet topic," said Eva, with heightened color; "she will take up her prophecy now, and give it to us wicked daughters of Zion; but, after all, it only makes one feel worried and bad, and one doesn't know what to do. We don't make the world; we are born into and find it ready made. We find certain things are customs—certain things are expected of us—and we begin to say A, and then we must say B, and so on through the whole alphabet. We don't want to say B, but we must because we have said A. It isn't every one that is brave and strong enough to know where to stop, and face the world, and say, 'No, I will not do it.' We must keep step with our neighbors."

"Well," said Ida, "who is it that says, 'Be not conformed to the world'?"

"Yes—I know," said Eva; "there's the Bible—there are all the lessons and prayers and hymns of the Church all going one way, and our lives all going the other—*all* our lives—everybody's life—even nice people's lives—all go the other way; except now and then one. There's our new rector, now, he is beginning to try to bring us up to live as the Church directs; but mamma and Aunt Maria, and all of them, cry out that he is High Church, and going to Popery, and all that; they say that if one is to live as he says, and go out to prayers morning and evening, and to Holy Communion every Sunday, it will just upset our whole plan of life, that one might as well go into a convent—and so it will. One can't be in parties all night, and go to prayers every morning; one can't go through that awful Holy Communion every Sunday, and live as we generally do through the week. All our rector is trying to do, is simply to make a *reality* of our profession; he wants us to carry out in good faith what is laid down in the Prayer-book; but you see we can't do it without giving up the world as we have it arranged now. For my part, I'm going to the daily services in Lent, if I don't any other time, and though it does make me feel dreadfully wicked and uncomfortable."

"Oh, you poor child!" said Ida; "why haven't you strength to do as you please?"

"Why haven't I the arm of a blacksmith? why can't I walk ten miles? There are differences of power in mind as well as body," said Eva.

The conversation was interrupted at this moment by Mr. Van Arsdel, who entered quietly, with his spectacles and newspapers.

"The children are having lively times in there," he said, "and I thought I'd just come here and sit where it's quiet, and read my papers."

"Papa says that every evening," said Eva.

"Well, the fact is, Mr. Henderson," said he, with a confiding sort of simplicity, "Ida and I feel at home in here, because it's just the little old place wife and I had when we began. You see, these are all my old things that we first went to housekeeping with, and I like them. I didn't want to have them sent off to auction, if they are old and clumsy."

"And he should have them, so he should, Pa-sey dear," said Eva, caressingly, putting her arm round his neck. "But come, Mr. Henderson, I suppose the gay world outside will expect us."

I had risen and was looking over the library. It was largely composed of modern scientific and physiological works.

"You see my light reading," said Ida, with a smile.

"Ida's books are a constant reproach to me," said Eva; "but I dip in now and then, and fish up some wonderful pearl out of them; however, I confess to just the fatal laziness she reprobates—I don't go *through* anything."

"Well, Mr. Henderson, we won't keep you from the world of the parlors," said Ida; "but consider you have the *entrée* here whenever you want a quiet talk; and we will be friends," she said, stretching out her hand with the air of a queen.

"You honor me too much, Miss Van Arsdel," said I.

"Come now, Mr. Henderson, we can't allow our principal literary lion to be kept in secret places," said Miss Eva. "You are expected to walk up and down and show yourself; there are half a dozen girls to whom I have promised to present you."

And in a moment I found myself standing in a brilliant circle of gay tropical birds of fashion, where beauty, or the equivalent of beauty, charmingness, was the rule, and not the exception. In foreign lands, my patriotic pride had often been fed by the enthusiasm excited by my countrywomen. The beauty and grace of American women, their success in foreign circles, has passed into a proverb; and in a New York company of young girls one is really dazzled by prettiness. It is not the grave, grand, noble type of the Madonna and the Venus di Milo, but the delicate, brilliant, distracting prettiness of young birds, kittens, lambs, and flowers—something airy and fairy—belonging to youth and youthful feeling. You see few that promise to ripen and wax fairer in middle life, but almost all are like delicate, perfectly-blossomed flowers—fair, brilliant and graceful, with a fragile and evanescent beauty.

The manners of our girls have been criticised, from the foreign standpoint, somewhat severely. It is the very nature of republican institutions to give a sort of unconventional freedom to its women. There is no upper world of court and aristocracy to make laws for them, or press down a framework of etiquette upon them. Individual freedom of opinion and action pervades every school; it is breathed in the very air, and each one is, in a great degree, a law unto herself. Every American girl feels herself in the nobility; she feels adequate to the situation, and perfectly poised in it. She dares do many things not permitted in foreign lands, because she feels strong in herself, and perfectly sure of her power.

Yet he who should presume on this frank generosity of manner, will find that Diana has her arrows; and that her step is free only because she knows her strength, and understands herself perfectly, and is competent to any situation.

At present, the room was full of that battledore-and-shuttlecock conversation, in which everything in heaven above or earth beneath is bantered to and fro, flitting and flying here and there from one bright lip to another.

"Now, really and truly, girls, are you going to the early services this Lent? Oh, Mr. Selwyn is such a good man! and wasn't his pastoral letter beautiful? We really ought to go. But, girls, I can't get up—indeed, I can't; do you know, it's dreadful—seven o'clock—only think of it. You won't go, Eva?"

"Yes, I shall."

' I lay you a pair of gloves you won't, now," quoth a mouth, adorned with a long pair of waxed moustaches of a true Imperial type.

"See if I don't."

"Oh, mamma says I mustn't try," said another; "I have not the strength."

"And I tell Eva she can't do it," said Mrs. Van Arsdel.

"Eva is always over-doing; she worked herself to death in a mission class last year. The fact is, one can't do these things, and go into society."

"But what's the use of society, mamma?" said Eva.

"Oh, well; we can't all turn into monks and nuns, you know; and that's what these modern High Church doings would bring us to. I'm a good, old-fashioned Episcopalian; I believe in going to church on Sundays—and that's all we used to hear about."

"Do you know, Mr. Fellows, I saw you at St. Alban's?" said Miss Alice.

"On your knees, too," said Miss Eva.

"Do you believe in bowing to the altar?" said a third; "I think it's quite Popish."

"Girls, what are going to be worn for hats this spring? have you been to Madame De Tullegigs? I declare it's a shame! but Lent is just the busiest time about one's clothes, one must have everything ready for Easter, you know. How do you like the new colors, Mr. Fellows?"

"What! the hell-fire colors?" said Jim.

"Oh, horrors! You dreadful creature, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" screamed in four or five voices.

"Am ashamed—sackcloth and ashes, and all that; eat nothing but codfish," said Jim. "But that's what they call 'em, any way—hell-fire colors."

"I never did hear such a profane creature. Girls, isn't he dreadful?"

"I say, Miss Alice," said Jim, "do you go to confession up there? 'Cause, you see, if that thing is getting about, I think I'll turn priest."

"I think *you* ought to go to confession," said she.

"I shall in the good times coming, when we have lady priests."

"Oh, Mr. Henderson, do you believe in women's rights?"

"Certainly."

"Well, for my part, I have all the rights I want," said Miss Alice.

"I should think you did," said Jim Fellows; "but it's hard on us."

"Well, I think that is all infidelity," said another;—"goes against the Bible. *Do* you think women ought to speak in public?"

"Ristori and Fanny Kemble, for instance," said I.

"Oh, well—they are speaking other people's words; but their own?"

"Why not as well as in private?"

"Oh, because—why, I think it's dreadful; don't you?"

"I can't perceive why. I am perfectly charmed to hear women speak, in public or private, who have anything good or agreeable to say."

"But the publicity is so shocking!"

"Is it any more public than waltzing at the great public balls?"

"Oh, well, I think lecturing is dreadful; you'll never convince me. I hate all those dreadful, raving, tearing, stramming women."

In which very logical and consecutive way the leading topics of the age were elegantly disposed of; and at eleven o'clock I found myself out on the pavement with the inexhaustible Jim, who went singing and whistling by my side as fresh as a morning blackbird. My head was in a pretty thorough whirl; but I was initiated into society,—to what purpose shall hereafter appear.

CHAPTER XIX.

FLIRTATION.

"LOOK there," said Jim Fellows, throwing down a pair of Jouvin's gloves. "There's from the divine Alice."

"A present?"

"A philopena."

"Seems to me, Jim, you are pushing your fortunes in that quarter?"

"Yes; having a gay time! Adoring at the shrine and all that," said Jim. "The lovely Alice is like one of the Madonna pictures—to be knelt to, sworn to, vowed to—but I can't be the possessor. In the meanwhile, let's have as good a time as possible. We have the very best mutual understanding. I am her sworn knight, and wear her colors—behold!"

And Jim opened his coat, and showed a pretty knot of carnation-colored ribbon.

"But, I thought, Jim, you talked the other night as if you could get any of them you wanted?"

"Who says I couldn't, man? Does not the immortal Shakespeare say, 'She is a woman; therefore to be won'? You don't go to doubting Shakespeare at this time of day, I hope?"

"Well, then—"

"Well, then; you see, Hal, we get wiser every day—that is, I do—and it begins to be borne in on my mind that these rich girls won't pay, if you could get them. The game isn't worth the candle."

"But there is real thought and feeling and cultivation among them," said I, taking up the gauntlet with energy.

"So there is real juice in hot-house grapes; but if I should have a present of a hot-house to-morrow, what should I have to run it with? These girls have the education of royal princesses, and all the habits and wants of them; and what could a fellow do with them if he got them? We haven't any Parliament to vote dowries to keep them up on. I declare, I wish you had heard those girls the other night go on about that engagement, and what they expected when their time comes. Do you know the steps of getting engaged?"

"I cannot say I have that happiness," said I.

"Well, first, there's the engagement-ring, not a sign of love, you understand, but a thing to be discussed and compared with all the engagement-rings, past, present, and to come, with Tom's ring, and Dick's ring, and Harry's ring. If you could have heard the girls tell over the prices of the different engagement-rings for the last six months, and bring up with Rivington's, which, it seems, is a solitaire worth a thousand! Henceforth nothing less is to be thought of. Then the wedding present to your wife. Rivington gives $30,000 worth of diamonds. Wedding fees, wedding journey to every expensive place that can be thought of, you ought to have a little fortune to begin with. The lovely creatures are perfectly rapacious in their demands under these heads. I heard full lists of where they were going and what they wanted to have. Then comes a house, in a fashionable quarter, to the tune of fifty thousand dollars; then furniture, carriages, horses, opera-boxes. The short of the matter is, old Van Arsdel's family are having a jolly time on the income of a million. There are six of them, and every one wants to set up in life on the same income. So, you see, the sum is how to divide a million so as to make six millions out of it. The way to do it is plain. Each son and daughter must marry a million, and get as much of a man or woman with it as pleases heaven."

"And suppose some of them should love some *man*, or woman, more than gold or silver, and choose love in place of money?" said I.

"Well," said Jim, "that's quite supposable; any of these girls is capable of it. But after all, it would be rough on a poor girl to take her at her word. What do they know about it? The only domestic qualification the most practical of them ever think of attaining, is how to make sponge-cake. I believe, when they are thinking of getting married, they generally make a little sponge-cake, and mix a salad dressing, that fits them for the solemn and awful position of wife and mother, which you hear so much about. Now, the queenly Alice is a splendid girl, and can talk French and German and Italian; but her knowledge of natural history is limited. I imagine she thinks gloves grow in packs on the trees, and artificial flowers are raised from seed, and dresses develop by uniform laws of nature at the rate of three or four a month. If you could get the darling to fly to your arms, and the old gentleman shouldn't come round, and give her what he could afford, how could you console her when she finds out the price of gloves and gaiter-boots, and all the ordinary comforts? I'm afraid the dear child will be ready to murder you for helping her to her own way. So you see, *Jim* doesn't invest in engagement-rings this year."

Thereupon I sung:

"A sly old fox one day did spy,
A bunch of grapes that hung so high," &c.

"Sing away, my good fellow," said Jim. "Maybe I am the fox; but I'm a fox that has cut his eye-teeth. I'm too cute to put my neck in that noose, you see. No, sir; you can mention to Queen Victoria that if she wants Jim Fellows to marry one of her daughters, why Parliament has got to come down handsomely with dowry to keep her on. They are worth keeping, these splendid creations of nature and art; but it takes as much as to run a first-class steamer. They go exactly in the line of fine pictures and statuary, and all that. They may be adorable and inspiring, and exalting and refining and purifying, the very poetry of existence, the altogether lovely; but, after all, it is only the rich that can afford to keep them. A wife costs more in our day than a carriage or a conscience, and both those are luxuries too expensive for Jim."

"Jim! Jim!! Jim!!!" I exclaimed, in tones of expostulation; but the impracticable Jim cut a tall pirouette, and sung,

> "My old massa told me so,
> Best looking nigger in the country, O!
> I looked in the glass and I found it so—*o*—o—O—*O*."

The crescendo here made the papers flutter, and created a lively breeze in the apartment.

"And now, farewell, divinest Alice, Jim must go to work. Let's see. Oh! I've promised a rip-staving skinner on Tom Brown in that Custom House affair."

"What *is* that business? What has Brown done? If all is true that is alleged he ought to be turned out of decent society."

"Oh pshaw! you don't understand; it's nothing but a dust we're kicking up because it's a dry time. Brown's a good fellow enough, I dare say, but you know we want to sell our papers and these folks want hot hash with their breakfast every morning, and somebody has got to be served up. You see the *Seven Stars* started this story, and sold immensely, and we come in on the wave; the word to our paper is 'pitch in' and so I'm pitching in."

"But, Jim, is it the fair thing to do when you don't know the truth of the story?"

"The truth! well, my dear fellow, who knows or cares anything about truth in our days? We want to sell our papers."

"And to sell your papers you will sell your honor as a man and a gentleman."

"Oh! bother, Hal, with your preaching."

"But, Jim, you ought to examine both sides and know the truth."

"I do examine; generally write on both sides when these rows come on. I'm going to defend Brown in the *Forum*;

you see they sent round yesterday for an article, so you see Jim makes his little peculium both ways."

"Jim, is that the square thing?"

"Why not? It would puzzle the Devil himself to make out what the truth is in one of our real double and twisted New York newspaper rows. I don't pretend to do it, but I'll show up either side or both sides if I'm paid for it. We young men must live! If the public must have spicery we must get it up for them. We only serve out what they order. I tell you, now, what this great American people wants is a semi-occasional *row* about something, no matter what; a murder, or a revival, or a great preacher, or the Black Crook; the Lord or the Devil, anything to make matters lively, and break up the confounded dull times round in the country."

"And so you get up little personal legends, myths, about this or that man?"

"Exactly, that's what public men are good for. They are our drums and tamborines; we beat on 'em to amuse the people and make a variety; nobody cares for anything more than a day; they forget it to-morrow, and something else turns up."

"And you think it right," said I, "to use up character just as you do boot-blacking to make your boots shine? How would you like to be treated so yourself?"

"Shouldn't mind it a bit—Bless your buttons—it don't hurt anybody. Nobody thinks the worse of them. Why, you could prove conclusively that any of our public men break the whole ten commandments at a smash—break 'em for breakfast, dinner and supper, and it wouldn't hurt 'em. People only oh and ah and roll up their eyes and say 'Terrible!' and go out and meet him, and it's 'My dear fellow, how are you? why haven't you been round to our house lately?' By and by they say, 'Look here, we're tired of this about Brown, give us more variety.' Then Jones turns up and off go the whole pack after Jones. That keeps matters lively, you see."

I laughed, and Jim was perfectly satisfied. All that he ever wanted in an argument was to raise a laugh, and he was triumphant, and went scratching on with his work with untiring industry. He always left me with an uneasy feeling, that by laughing and letting him alone I was but half doing my duty, and yet it seemed about as feasible to present moral considerations to a bobolink.

"There," he said, after half an hour of scribbling, "there's so much for old Mam."

"Who's old 'Mam'?"

"Haven't heard! why, your mistress and mine, the old Mammon of unrighteousness; she is mistress of all things here below. You can't even carry on religion in this world but through her. You must court old Mam, or your churches, and your missions, and all the rest go under, and Jim works hard for her, and she owes him a living."

"There have been men in our day who prevailed in spite of her."

"Who, for example?"

"Garrison."

"Well, he's top of the heap now, sure enough, but I tell you that was a long investment. Jim has to run on ready cash and sell what's asked for now. I stand at my counter, 'Walk up, gentlemen, what'll you take; orders taken and executed with promptness and despatch. Religion? yes, sir. Here's the account of the work of Divine grace in Skowhegan; fifty awakened and thirty-nine indulging in hope. Here's criticism on Boanerges' orthodoxy, showing how he departs from the great vital doctrines of grace, giving up Hell and all the other consolations of our holy religion. We'll serve you out orthodoxy red hot. Anything in this line? Here's the latest about sweet little Dame aux Camelias, and lovely little Kitty Blondine.

"Oh! Kitty is my darling, my darling, my darling, etc."

And here's the reformatory, red hot, hit or miss, here's for the niggers and the paddies and the women and all the enslaved classes. Jim will go it for any of them, only give him his price.' I think of getting up a show bill with list of prices affixed. Jim will run anybody up or run anybody down to order."

I put my hand over his mouth. "Come, you born magpie," said I, "you shan't make yourself out so much worse than you are."

[Eva Van Arsdel to Isabel Convers.]

My Dear Belle:—I told you I would write the end of my little adventure, and whether the "hermit" comes or not. Yes, my dear, sure enough, he did come, and mamma and we all like him immensely; he had really quite a success among us. Even Ida, who never receives calls, was gracious, and allowed him to come into her sanctum because he is a champion of the modern idea about women. Have you seen an article in the "*Milky Way*" on the "Women of our Times," taking the modern radical ground? Well, it was by him; it suited Ida to a hair, but some little things in it vexed me because there was a phrase or two about the "fashionable butterflies," and all that; that comes a great deal too near the truth to be altogether agreeable. I don't care when Ida says such things, because she's another woman, and between ourselves we know there *is* a deal of nonsense current among us, and if we have a mind to talk about it among ourselves, why it's like abusing one's own relations in the bosom of the family, one of the sweetest domestic privileges, you know; but, when lordly man begins to come to judgment and call over the roll of our sins, I am inclined to tell him to look at home, and to say, "Pray, what do you know about us, sir?" I stand up for my sex, right or wrong; so you see we had a spicy little controversy, and I made the hermit open his eyes (and, between us, he has handsome eyes to open). He looked innocently astonished at first to be taken up so briskly, and called to account for his sayings. You see the way these men have of going on and talking without book about us quite blinds them; they can set us down conclusively in the abstract when they don't see us or hear us, but when a real live girl meets them and asks an account of their sayings they begin to be puzzled. However, I must say my lord *can* talk when he fairly is put up to it. He is a true, serious, earnest-hearted man, and does talk beautifully, and his eyes speak when he is silent. The forepart of the evening, you see, we were in a state of most charming agreement; he was in our little "Italy," and we had the nicest of times going over all the pictures and portfolios and the dear old Italian life; it seems as if we had both of us seen, and thought of, and liked the same things—it was really curious!

Well, like enough, that's all there is to it. Ten to one he never will call again. Mamma invited him to be here every Wednesday, quite urged it upon him, but he said his time was so filled up with *work*. There you see is where men have the advantage of girls! They have something definite to fill up their time, thought and hearts; we *nothing*, so we think of them from sheer idleness, and they forget us through press of business. Ten to one he never calls here again. Why should he? I shouldn't think he would. *I* wouldn't if I were he. He isn't a dancing man, nor an idler, but one that takes life earnestly, and after all I dare say he thinks us fashionable girls a sad set. But I'm sure he must admire Ida; and she was wonderfully gracious *for her*, and gave him the entrée of her sanctum, where there never are any but rational sayings and doings.

Well, we shall see.

I am provoked with what you tell me about the reports of my engagement to Mr. Sydney, and I tell you now once again "No, no." I told you in my last that I was not engaged, and I now tell you what is more that I never *can, shall* or *will* be engaged to him; *my mind is made up,* but how to get out of the net that is closing round me I don't see. I think all these things are "perplexing and disagreeable."

If a girl wants to do the fair thing it is hard to know how. First you refuse outright, and then my lord comes as a friend. Will you only allow him the liberty to try and alter your feelings, and all that? You shall not be forced; he only wants you to get more acquainted, and the result is you go on getting webbed and meshed in day after day more and more. You can't refuse flowers and attentions offered by a friend; if you take them you may be quite sure they will be made to mean more. Mamma and Aunt Maria have a provoking way of talking about it constantly as a settled thing, and one can't protest from morning till night, apropos to every word. At first they urged me to receive his attentions; now they are saying that I have accepted so many I can't honorably withdraw. And so he doesn't really give me an opportunity to bring the matter to a crisis; he has a silent taking-for-granted air, that is provoking. But the law that binds our sex is the law of all ghosts and spirits; we can't speak till we are spoken to; meanwhile reports spread, and people say hateful things as if you were trying and failing. How angry that makes me! One is almost tempted sometimes to accept just to show that one can; but, seriously, dear Belle, this is wicked trifling. Marriage is an awful, a tremendous thing, and we of the church are without excuse if we go into it lightly or unadvisedly, and I never shall marry till I see the man that is my fate. I have what mamma calls domestic ideas, and *I'm going to have them*, and when I marry it shall be for the man alone, not a pieced up affair of carriages, horses, diamonds, opera boxes, cashmeres *with* a man, but a *man* for whom all the world were well lost; then I shall not be afraid of the church service which now stands between me and Mr. Sydney. I cannot, I dare not lie to God and swear falsely at the altar, to gain the whole world.

I wish you could hear our new rector. He is making a sensation among us. If the life he is calling on us all to live is the real and true one, we shall soon have to choose between what is called society, and the church; for if being a church-woman means all he says, one cannot be in it without really making religion the life's business—which, you know, we none of us do or have. Dear man, when I see him tugging and straining to get our old, sleepy, rich families into heavenly ways, I think of Pegasus yoked to a stone cart. He is all life and energy and enthusiasm, he breathes fire, and his wings are spread heavenward, but there's the old dead, lumbering cart at his heels! Poor man!—and poor cart too—for I am in it with the rest of the lumber!

We are in all the usual Spring agonies now about clothes. The house reverberates with the discussion of hats and bonnets, and feathers and flowers, and overskirts and underskirts, and all the paraphernalia—and what an absurd combination it makes with the daily services in Lent. Absurd? No—*dreadful!* for at church we are reading of our Saviour's poverty and fasting and agonies—what a contrast between his life and ours! Was it to make us such as we are that he thus lived and died?

Cousin Sophia is happy in her duties in the sisterhood. Her church life and daily life are all of a piece—one part is not a mockery of the other. There's Ida too—out of the church, making no profession of churchly religion, but living wholly out of this bustling, worldly sphere, devoted to a noble life purpose—fitting herself to make new and better paths for women. Ida has none of these dress troubles; she has cut loose from all. Her simple black dress costs incredibly less than our outfit—it is all arranged *with a purpose*—yet she always has the air of a lady, and she has besides a real *repose,* which we never have. This matter of dress has a thousand jars and worries and vexations to a fastidious nature; one wishes one were out of it.

I have heard that nuns often say they are more blessed than ever they were in the world, and I can conceive why,—it is a perfect and blissful rest from all that troubles ordinary women. In the first place, the marriage question. They know that they are not to be married, and it is a comfort to have a *definite* settlement of that matter. Then all agitations and fluctuations about *that* are over. In the next place, the dress question. They have a dress provided, put it on, and wear it without thought or inquiry; there is no room for thought, or use for inquiry. In the third place, the question of sphere and work is settled for them; they know their duties exactly; and if they don't, there is a director to tell them; they have only to obey. This must be rest—blissful rest.

I think of it sometimes, and wonder why it is that this dress question must smother us women and wear us out, and take our whole life and breath as it does! In our family it is perfectly fearful. If one had only one's self to please, it is hard enough—what with one's own fastidious taste, with dressmakers who never keep their word, and push you off at the last moment with abominable things; but when one has pleased one's self, then comes mamma, and then all the girls, every one with an opinion ; and then when this gauntlet is run, comes Aunt Maria, more solemn and dictatorial than the whole—so that by the time anything gets really settled, one is so fatigued that life doesn't seem really worth having.

I told Mr. Henderson, in our little discussion last night, that I envied *men* because they had a chance to live a real, grand, heroic life, while we were smothered under trifles and common-places, and he said, in reply, that the men had no more chances in this way than we; that theirs was a life of drudgeries and detail; and that the only way for man or woman was to animate ordinary duties by a heroic spirit. He said that woman's speciality was to idealize life by shedding a noble spirit upon its ordinary trifles. I don't think he is altogether right. I still think the opportunities for a noble life are ten to one in the hands of men; but still there is a great deal in what he says. He spoke beautifully of the noble spirit shown by some women in domestic life. I thought perhaps it was his mother he was thinking of. He must have known some noble woman, for his eye kindled when he spoke about it.

How I have run on--and what a medley this letter is. I dare not look it over, for I should be sure to toss it into the fire. Write to me soon, dearest Bella, and tell me what you think of matters so far.

Your ever loving EVA.

CHAPTER XX.

I BECOME A FAMILY FRIEND.

I HAVE often had occasion to admire the philosophical justice of popular phrases. The ordinary cant phraseology of life generally represents a homely truth because it has grown upon reality like a lichen upon a rock. "Falling in love" is a phrase of this kind; it represents just that phenomenon which is all the time happening among the sons and daughters of Adam in most unforeseen times and seasons, and often when the subject least intends it, and even intends something quite the contrary.

The popular phrase "falling in love" denotes something that comes unexpectedly. One may walk into love preparedly, advisedly, with the eyes of one's understanding open; but one *falls in* love as one falls down stairs in a dark entry, simply because the foot is set where there is nothing for it to stand on, which I take to be a simile of most philosophical good resolutions.

I flattered myself at this period of my existence, that I was a thorough-paced philosopher; a man that had outlived the snares and illusions of youth, and held himself and all his passions and affections under most perfect control.

The time had not yet come marked out in my supreme wisdom for me to meditate matrimonial ideas: in the meanwhile, I resolved to make the most of that pleasant and convenient arbor on the Hill Difficulty which is commonly called Friendship.

Concerning this arbor I have certain observations to make. It is most commodiously situated, and commands charming prospects. We are informed of some, that on a clear day one can see from it quite plainly as far as to the Delectable Mountains. From my own experience I have no doubt of this fact. For a young man of five-and-twenty or thereabouts, not at present in circumstances to marry, what is more charming than to become the intimate friend in a circle of vivacious and interesting young ladies, in easy circumstances, who live in a palace surrounded by all the elegancies, refinements, and comforts of life?

More blissful still, if he be welcomed to these bowers of beauty by a charming and courteous mamma who hopes he will make himself at home, and assures him that they will treat him quite as one of the family. This means, of course, that perfect confidence is reposed in his discretion. He is labeled—"Safe." He is to gaze on all these charms, with a disinterested spirit, without a thought of personal appropriation. Of course he is not to stand in the way of eligible establishments that may offer, but meanwhile he can make himself generally agreeable and useful. He may advise the fair charmers as to their reading and superintend the cultivation of their minds; he may be on hand whenever an escort is needed to a party, he may brighten up dull evenings by reading aloud, and in short may be that useful individual that is looked on "quite as a brother, you know."

Young men who glide into this position in families, generally, I believe, enjoy it quite as much as the moth-millers who seem to derive such pleasure from the light and heat of the evening lamp, and with somewhat similar results. But though thousands of these unsophisticated insects singe their wings every evening, the thousand-and-first one comes to the charge with a light heart in his bosom, and quite as satisfied of his good fortune as I was when Mrs. Van Arsdel with the sweetest and most motherly tones said to me, "I know, Mr. Henderson, the lonely life you young men must lead when you first come to cities; you have been accustomed to the home circle, to mother and sisters, and it must be very dreary. Pray, make this a sort of home; drop in at any time, our parlors are always open, and some of us about; or if not, why, there are the pictures and the books, you know, and there is the library where you can write."

Surely it was impossible for a young man to turn away from all this allurement. It was the old classic story:—

> "The mother Circe with the Syrens three,
> Among the flowery kirtled Naïdes."

Mrs. Van Arsdel, as I said, was one of three fair sisters who had attained a great celebrity, in the small provincial town where they were born, for their personal charms. They were known far and near as the beautiful Miss Askotts. Their father was a man rather in the lower walks of life, and the fortunes of the family were made solely by the personal attractions of the daughters.

The oldest of these, Maria Askott, married into one of the so-called first New York families. The match was deemed in the day of it a very brilliant one. Tom Wouvermans was rich, showy, and dissipated; and in a very few years ran through both with his property and constitution, and left his wife the task of maintaining a genteel standing on very limited means.

The second sister, Ellen, married Mr. Van Arsdel when he was in quite modest circumstances, and had been carried up steadily by his business ability to the higher circles of New York life. The third had married a rich Southern planter whose fortunes have nothing to do with my story.

The Van Arsdel household, like most American families, was substantially under feminine rule. Mr. Van Arsdel was a quiet, silent man, whose whole soul was absorbed in business, and who left to his wife the whole charge of all that concerned the household and his children.

Mrs. Van Arsdel, however, was under the control of her elder sister. There are born dictators as well as born poets. Certain people come into the world with the instinct and talent for ruling and teaching, and certain others with the desire and instinct of being taught and ruled over. There are people born with such a superfluous talent for management and dictation that they always, instinctively and as a matter of course, arrange not only their own affairs but those of their friends and relations, in the most efficient and complete manner possible. Such is the tendency of things to adaptation and harmony, that where such persons exist we are sure to find them surrounded by those who take delight in being guided, who like to learn and to look up. Such a domestic ruler was Mrs. Maria Wouvermans, commonly known in the Van Arsdel circle as "Aunt Maria," a name of might and authority anxiously interrogated and quoted in all passages of family history.

Now the fact is quite striking that the persons who hold this position in domestic policy are often not particularly strong or wise. The governing mind of many a circle is not by any means the mind best fitted either mentally or morally to govern. It is neither the best nor the cleverest individual of a given number who influences their opinions and conduct, but the person the most perseveringly self-asserting. It is amusing in looking at the world to see how much people are taken at their own valuation. The persons who always have an opinion on every possible subject ready made, and put up and labeled for immediate use, concerning which they have no shadow of a doubt or hesitation, are from that very quality born rulers. This positiveness, and preparedness, and readiness may spring from a universal shallowness of nature, but it is none the less efficient. While people of deeper perceptions and more insight are wavering in delicate distresses, balancing testimony and praying for light, this common-place obtuseness comes in and leads all captive, by mere force of knowing exactly what it wants, and being incapable of seeing beyond the issues of the moment.

Mrs. Maria Wouvermans was all this. She always believed in herself, from the cradle. The watchwords of her conversation were always of a positive nature. "To be sure," "certainly," "of course," "I see," and "I told you so."

Correspondingly to this, Mrs. Van Arsdel, her next sister, was one who said habitually, "What would you do, and how would you do it?" and so the domestic duet was complete. Mrs. Wouvermans did not succeed in governing or reclaiming her husband, but she was none the less self-confident for that; and having seen him comfortably into his grave, she had nothing to do but get together the small remains of the estate and devote herself to "dear Ellen and her children." Mrs. Wouvermans managed her own house, where everything was arranged with the strictest attention and economy, and to the making a genteel appearance on a small sum, and yet found abundance of time to direct sister Ellen and her children.

She was a good natured, pleasant-mannered woman, fond of her nieces and nephews; and her perfect faith in herself, the decision of all her announcements, and the habitual attitude of consultation in which the mother of the family stood towards her, led the Van Arsdel children as they grew up to consider "Aunt Maria," like the Bible or civil government, as one of the great ready-made facts of society, to be accepted without dispute or injury.

Mrs. Wouvermans had her own idea of the *summum bonum,* that great obscure point about which philosophers have groped in vain. Had Plato or Anaxagoras or any of those ancient worthies appealed to her, she would have smiled on them benignantly and said: "Why yes, of course, don't you see? the thing is very simple. You must keep the best society and make a good appearance."

Mrs. Van Arsdel had been steadily guided by her in the paths of fashionable progression. Having married into a rich old family, Aunt Maria was believed to have mysterious and incommunicable secrets of gentility at her command. She was always supposed to have an early insight into the secret counsels of that sublime, awful, mysterious "*they,*" who give the law in fashionable life. "*They* don't wear bonnets that way, now!' "My love, *they* wear gloves sewed with colored silks, now!" or, "*they* have done with hoops and flowing sleeves," or, "*they* are beginning to wear hoops again! *They* are going to wear long trains," or, "*they* have done with silver powder now!" All which announcements were made with a calm solemnity of manner calculated to impress the youthful mind with a sense of their profound importance.

Mr. Van Arsdel followed Aunt Maria's lead with that unquestioning meekness which is so edifying a trait in our American gentlemen. In fact he considered the household and all its works and ways as an insoluble mystery which he was well pleased to leave to his wife; and if his wife chose to be guided by "Maria" he had no objection. So long as his business talent continued yearly to enlarge his means of satisfying the desires and aspirations of his family, so long he was content quietly and silently to ascend in the scale of luxurious living, to have his house moved from quarter to quarter until he reached a Fifth Avenue palace, to fill it with pictures and statuary, of which he knew little and cared less.

Under Aunt Maria's directions Mrs. Van Arsdel aspired to be a leader in fashionable society. No house was to be so attractive as her's, no parties so brilliant, no daughters in greater demand. Nature had generously seconded her desires. Her daughters were all gifted with fine personal points as well as a more than common share of that spicy genial originality of mind which is as a general thing rather a characteristic of young American girls.

Mr. Van Arsdel had had his say about the education of his sons and daughters. No expense had been spared. They had been sent to the very best schools that money could procure, and had improved their advantages. The consequences of education had been as usual to increase the difficulties of controlling the subject.

The horror and dismay of Mrs. Van Arsdel and of Aunt Maria cannot be imagined when they discovered almost immediately on the introduction of Ida Van Arsdel into society that they had on their hands an actual specimen of the strong minded young woman of the period; a person who looked beyond shows, who did her own thinking, and who despised or approved with full vigor without consulting accepted standards, and was resolutely resolved not to walk in the ways her pastors or masters had hitherto considered the only appointed ones for young ladies of good condition.

To work embroidery, go to parties, entertain idlers and wait to be chosen in marriage, seemed to a girl who had spent six years in earnest study a most lame and impotent conclusion to all that effort; and when Ida Van Arsdel declared her resolution to devote herself to professional studies, Aunt Maria's indignation and disgust are not to be described.

"So shocking and indelicate! For my part I can't imagine how anybody can want to think on such subjects! I'm sure it gives me a turn just to look into a work on physiology, and all those dreadful pictures of what is inside of us! I think the less we know about such subjects the better; women were made to be wives and mothers, and not to trouble their heads about such matters; and to think of Ida, of all things, whose father is rich enough to keep her like a princess whether she ever does a thing or not! Why should *she* go into it? Why, Ida is not bad looking. She is quite pretty, in fact; there are a dozen girls with not half her advantages that have made good matches, but it's no use talking to her. That girl is obstinate as the everlasting hills, and her father backs her up in it. Well, we must let her go, and take care of the others. Eva is my god-child, and we must at any rate secure something for her." *Something,* meant of course a splendid establishment.

The time of my introduction into the family circle was a critical one.

In the race for fashionable leadership Mrs. Van Arsdel had one rival whose successes were as stimulating and as vexatious to her as the good fortune of Mordecai the Jew was to Haman in Old Testament times.

All her good fortune and successes were spoiled by the good fortune and successes of another woman, who was sure to be a little ahead of her in everything that she attempted; and this was the more trying as this individual began life with her, and was a sort of family connection.

In days of her youth there was one Polly Sanders, a remote cousin of the Askotts, who was reputed a beauty by some. Polly was what is called in New England "smart." She was one who never lost an opportunity, and, as the vulgar saying is, could make every edge cut. Her charms were far less than those of the Misses Askott, and she was in far more straitened circumstances; but she went at the problem of life in a sort of tooth-and-nail fashion, which often is extremely successful. She worked first in a factory, till she made a little money, with which she put herself to school—acquired showy accomplishments, and went up like a balloon; married a man with much the same talent for getting along in the world as herself; went to Paris and returned a traveled, accomplished woman, and the pair set up for first society people in New York; and to the infinite astonishment of Mrs. Wouverman, were soon in a position to patronize her, and to run a race, neck and neck, with the Van Arsdels.

What woman's Christian principles are adequate to support her under such trials? Nothing ever impressed Aunt Maria with such a sense of the evils of worldliness as Polly Elmore's career. She was fond of speaking of her familiarly as "Polly;" and recalling the time when she was only a factory-girl. According to Aunt Maria, such grasping, unscrupulous devotion to things seen and temporal, had never been known in anybody as in the case of Polly. Aunt Maria, of course, did not consider herself as worldly. Nobody ever does. You do not, I presume, my dear madam. When your minister preaches about worldly people, your mind immediately reverts to the Joneses and the Simpsons round the corner, and you rather wonder how they take it. In the same manner Aunt Maria's eyes were always being rolled up, and she was always in a shocked state at something these dreadful, worldly, dressy Elmores were doing. But still they went on from conquering to conquer. Mrs. Elmore was a dashing leader of fashion—spoke French like a book—was credibly reported to have skated with the Emperor at the Bois de Boulogne—and, in short, there was no saying what feathers she didn't wear in her cap.

The Van Arsdels no sooner did a thing than the Elmores did more. The Van Arsdels had a house in Fifth Avenue; the Elmores set up a French chateau on the Park. The Van Arsdels piqued themselves on *recherché* society. The Elmores made it a point to court all the *literati* and distinguished people. Hence, rising young men were of great value as ornaments to the *salons* of the respective houses—if they had brought with them a name in the literary world, so much the more was their value—it was important to attach them to *our salon*, lest they should go to swell the triumphs of the enemy.

The crowning, culminating triumph of the Elmores was the engagement, just declared, of Maria, the eldest daughter, to young Rivington, of Rivington Manor, concerning which Aunt Maria and Mrs. Van Arsdel were greatly moved.

The engagement was declared, and brilliant wedding preparations on foot that should eclipse all former New York grandeurs; and what luminary was there in the Van Arsdel horizon to draw attention to that quarter?

"Positively, Ellen," said Aunt Maria, "the engagement between Eva and Wat Sydney *must come out.* It provokes me to see the absurd and indelicate airs the Elmores give themselves about this Rivington match. It's really in shocking taste. I'm sure *I* don't envy them Sam Rivington. There are shocking stories told about him. They say he is a perfect *roué*—has been taken home by the police night after night. How Polly, with all her worldliness, can make such an utter sacrifice of her daughter is what *I* can't see. Now Sydney, everybody knows, is a strictly correct man. Ellen, this thing ought to come out."

"But, dear me, Maria, Eva is such a strange child. She won't admit that there is any engagement."

"She *must* admit it, Ellen—of course she must. It's Ida that puts her up to all her strange ideas, and will end by making her as odd as she is herself. There's that new young man, that Henderson—why don't we turn him to account? Ida has taken a fancy to him, I hear, and it's exactly the thing. Only get Ida's thoughts running that way and she'll let Eva alone, and stop putting notions into her head. Henderson is a gentleman, and would be a very proper match for Ida. He is literary, and she is literary. He is for all the modern ideas, and so is she. I'm sure, I go with all my heart for encouraging him. It's exactly the thing."

And Aunt Maria

> "Shook her ambrosial curls and gave the nod,"

with a magnificence equal to Jupiter in the old Homeric days.

CHAPTER XXI.

I DISCOVER THE BEAUTIES OF FRIENDSHIP.

MUCH has been written lately concerning the doctrine of friendship between men and women. It is thought and said by some that there lies an unexplored territory in our American life, and we have the example of Madame Récamier set before us to show how perfectly intimate and devoted a whole circle of manly friends may be with one fair woman, without detriment or disadvantage to their domestic ties or hers. The adorable Juliet is the intimate friend at once of Matthew Montmorenci, the saint, of Chateaubriand, the poet, and of an indefinite number of artists and men of letters, all of whom address her in language of adoration and devotion, and receive from her affectionate messages in return. Chateaubriand spends every afternoon with Juliet, and every evening with his invalid wife, like a devoted and dutiful husband, and this state of things goes on from year to year without trouble and without scandal.

It was with some such sublimated precedent in my head that I allowed myself to yield to the charming temptation opened to me by my acquaintance with Eva Van Arsdel. Supposing by Jim's account that she was already engaged, looking on myself as yet far off from the place where I could think of marriage, what was there to hinder my enjoying her society? Of course, there was no possible danger to myself, and it would be absolute coxcombry to think that there would be any to her. She, who had been a queen of fashion, and who had the world under her feet, if she deigned to think kindly of a poor *littérateur*, it could surely lead to nothing dangerous. I might have been warned, if I were wise, by the fact that the night after my first presentation I lay awake and thought over all she had said, and counted the days that should intervene before next Wednesday evening. I would not for the world have had Jim Fellows divine what was going on within me; in fact I took as much pains to cajole and pacify and take myself in as if I had been a third party.

I woke about six o'clock in the dim grey of the next morning, from a dream in which Eva and I were talking together, when she seemed so vivid that I started up almost feeling that I saw her face in the air. Suddenly I heard the bell of a neighboring church strike the hour, and thought of what she had said the evening before about attending morning services.

What was to hinder my going to the church and seeing her again? There was a brisk morning walk, that was a good thing, and certainly morning devotion was something so altogether right and reasonable that I wondered I never had thought of it before. I dressed myself and turned out into the streets to seek the little church of the Holy Sepulcher where the new Rector of whom Eva had spoken held early Lenten services.

There was something quaint and rather exciting to my imagination to be one of a small band who sought the church at this early hour. The sunlight of the rising day streamed through the painted window and touched with a sort of glory the white dress of the priest; the organ played softly in subdued melody, and the words of the morning service had a sort of touching lovely sound. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" seemed to come to my thoughts with new force as I looked on the small number, two or three in a pew, who were scattered up and down through the church. She was there in a seat not far from me, shrouded in a simple black dress and veil, and seemed wholly and entirely absorbed by her prayer-book and devotions.

As the little company dispersed at the close of the services, I stood in the door and joined her as she passed out.

"Good morning, Miss Van Arsdel," I said.

She started and looked surprised, and a bright color flushed in her cheeks.

"Mr. Henderson! you quite astonish me."

"Why so?"

"There are so very few who get out at this hour; and you, I believe, are not of the church."

"I don't know what you mean by *the* church, exactly," said I.

"Oh," said she, looking at me with a conscious smile, "I know what everybody means that says *the* church—it generally means *our* church—the one that is *the* church for us; but you, I think, belong to the Bethany," she added.

"I do," said I, "but I have large sympathies for all others, particularly for yours, which seems to me in some points more worthily to represent what a church should be, than any other."

She looked pleased, and said with warmth, "Mr. Henderson, you must not judge our church by such very imperfect specimens as you see among us. We are very unworthy children of a noble mother; our church has everything in it to call us to the highest and best life, only we fall far below her teaching."

"I think I can see," I said, "that if the scheme of living set forth by the Episcopal Church were carried out with warmth and devotion, it would make an ideal sort of society."

"It would be a really consecrated life," she said, with warmth. "If all would agree to unite in daily morning and evening prayers for instance," she said, "how beautiful it would be. I never enjoy reading my Bible alone in my room as I do to have it read to me here in church; somehow to me there is a sacred charm about it when I hear it read there, and then to have friends, neighbors and families meet and pray together as one, every day, would be beautiful. I often think I should like to live close by one of those beautiful English cathedrals where they have choral services every day, and I would go morning and evening, but here, in this dreadful, flashy, busy, bustling New York, there is no such thing, I suppose, as getting any number of people to agree to daily worship."

"In that respect," said I, "we modern Christians seem to be less devout than the ancient heathen or the Mohammedans; you recollect Hajji Baba sums up the difference between the Englishman and the Persian by saying, 'We Persians pray seven times a day, and they, never.' "

"I like to come to church," she said, "it seems a shelter and a refuge. Nowadays there are so many things said that one doesn't know what to think of; so many things disputed that one has always supposed to be true; such a perfectly fatiguing rush of ideas and assertions and new ways that for my part I am glad to fall back upon something old and established, that I feel sure isn't going to melt away into mist before to-morrow."

"I can well appreciate that feeling," I said, "for I have it myself."

"Do you? Oh, Mr. Henderson, you don't know how it perplexes one. There's sister Ida, now! she has a circle of friends—the very nicest sort of people they seem to be!—but, dear me! when I am with them a little while, I get perfectly bewildered. No two of them seem to believe alike on any subject; and if you quote the Bible to them, they just open their eyes and look amazed at you, as if *that* was something quite behind the age; and as there is no standard with them, of course there is nothing settled. You feel as if life was built on water, and everything was rocking and tilting till you are quite dizzy. Now, I know I am a poor sort of a specimen of a Christian; but *I* couldn't live so! I fly back from this sort of thing, like a frightened bird, and take refuge in the church—*there* is something fixed, positive, and definite, that has stood the test of time; it is noble and dignified, and I abide by that."

"There is all that about it," said I; "and so very much that is attractive and charming in the forms of your church, that I think if you would only open your arms wide, and be liberal as the spirit of this age, you would indeed be *the* church of the world."

"You think we are not liberal?" she said.

"When you call yourselves *the* church, and make no account of all that true, pure, good souls—true followers of the same Saviour—are doing, it seems to me you are not."

"Ah, well, Mr. Henderson, perhaps we are wrong there—I cannot say. I know there are many churches and many dear, good souls in all; it is only to *me* that mine is *the* church; if that is an illusion, it is a happy one."

"Now," said I, "what a dreary picture should we have of New York Christianity, if we judged it by the few morning worshipers at Lenten services!"

"Yes, indeed," she said. I am often sorry for our rector—he is so earnest, and so few care to come; and yet he told us in his sermon, last Sunday, that these Lenten services were an act of union with our Saviour's self-denials and sufferings."

"Well, Miss Van Arsdel," said I, "I doubt not there are hundreds of thousands in this city who do really, in spirit, unite with the Saviour in self-denials and sufferings, daily, who do not express it in this form. If all who really love the Saviour, and are living in his spirit, *should* make a point of early morning service in Lent, I verily believe the churches would be crowded to overflowing."

"You do really think so?"

"I do. In spite of all that appears, I think ours is really, at heart, a religious age—it is only that we do not agree in the same external forms of expression."

"But how beautiful! oh, how beautiful it would be if we could!" she said. "Oh, it would be lovely if all the good and true could see each other, and stand side by side! I long for *visible* unity—and do you think, Mr. Henderson, we could unite in *more* beautiful forms than ours?"

"No; I do not," said I; "for me, for you, for many like us, these are the true forms, and the best; but we must remember that others have just as sacred associations, and are as dearly attached to other modes of worship as we to these."

"Then you really do prefer them yourself?"

"Well, Miss Van Arsdel, I unite with the church of my father and mother, because I was brought up in it; yet if I were to choose another, it would be yours."

She looked pleased, and I added: "It seems to me one of the most beautiful things about it is a daily service."

"Yes," she said, "and it is pleasant to have churches where you feel that worship is daily offered, whether people attend or not. There was something sacred and beautiful about the Church of St. Peter's in Rome—to think that at every hour of day or night worship was going on in it. I used to like to think of it when I awoke nights—that they were praying and adoring there—in this cold, dreary world; it seems as if it was like a Father's house, always light, and warm, and open."

"There is a beauty and use in all these forms and images," I said; "and I think if we are wise, we may take comfort in them all, without being enslaved by any."

Here our interview closed, as with a graceful salutation she left me at the door of her house.

The smile she gave me was so bright and heart-warm, that it lightened all my work through the day; a subtle sense of a new and charming companionship began to shed itself through all my labors, and, unconsciously and unwatched, commenced that process of double thought which made everything I read or wrote suggest something I wanted to say to her. The reader will not, therefore, wonder that I proved my sense of the beauty of a daily morning service by going with great regularity after this, and as regularly walking home with my enchanting companion.

I was innocently surprised to find how interesting the morning scenery in prosaic old New York had become. It was April, and the buds in the Park were swelling, and the green grass springing in the cracks of the pavement, and little sparrows twittered and nestled in the ivy that embowered the church—and all these things had a strange, new charm for me. I told myself, every day, that I was not in love with Eva Van Arsdel, or going to be ; I took myself to witness that all our conversation was on the most correct and dispassionate subjects, and not in the slightest degree inclining to any vanity of that nature. Since then, I have learned that Eva was the kind of woman with whom it made no difference what the subject matter of conversation was. It might be religion, or politics, or conic sections, but the animus of it was sure to be the same thing. It was her vital magnetism that gave the interest. It was, in fact, hardly any matter what we talked about, or whether we talked at all, it was the charm of being together that made these morning interviews so delightful ; though I believe we discussed nearly everything under the sun, with the most astonishing unanimity of sentiment.

I was very careful to keep the knowledge of my increasing intimacy from Jim Fellows. Early rising was not his forte, and I, very improperly, congratulated myself on the fewness of the worshipers at early service. By and by, I grew so conscious that I got a way of stealing out at an opposite door, appearing to walk off another way, and joining Eva at the next corner—lest haply my invariable constancy should attract attention. She noticed all these things with a droll, amused, little, half-conscious look. True daughter of Eve as she was, she had probably seen many a shy fish before, swimming around her golden net as artlessly as I was doing.

I soon became her obedient slave and servant, interpreting all her motions and intimations with humble assiduity. Of course I presented myself duly with Jim in the Wednesday evening receptions, where, as the rooms were filled with other company, we already began to practice an involuntary hypocrisy, keeping up our friendly intimacy by that kind of intuitive and undemonstrative communication natural to those who know each other by sympathy, and learn to understand each other without words.

I was a great deal in Ida's studio, probably much to the satisfaction of Aunt Maria and Mrs. Van Arsdel—while Eva glanced and twinkled in and out like a fire-fly in a meadow, taking my heart with her as she came and went, yet awing me with a dutiful reticence, lest "people should talk."

Ida was one of those calm, quiet, essentially self-poised women, with whom it would be quite possible for a man to have a very intimate friendship, without its toning off into anything warm, either on her part or on his. Everything with her was so positive and definite, that there was no possibility of going over the limits. I think that she really had a very warm esteem for me; but she looked at me and judged me solely in relation to Eva, and with a quiet persistency favored the intimacy that she saw growing between us. Her plans of life were laid far ahead; she was wedded to a purpose which she would not have renounced for any man on earth; but Eva was the very apple of her eye, and I think she had her own plans as to the settling of her life's destiny; in short, Ida was from the start the best friend I could have.

CHAPTER XXII.

I AM INTRODUCED TO THE ILLUMINATI.

A YOUNG man who commences life as a reformer, and a leader in the party of progress, while saying the best and most reasonable things in the world, and advocating what appear to him the most needed reforms. often finds himself, in consequence, in the condition of one who has pulled the string of a very large shower-bath. He wanted cold water, and he gets a deal more than he bargained for; in fact, often catches his breath, and wonders when this sort of thing is going to stop. My articles on the "Modern Woman," in the *Milky Way*, had brought me into notice in certain enthusiastic circles, and I soon found myself deluged with letters, appeals, pamphlets, newspapers, all calling for the most urgent and immediate attention, and all charging me on my allegiance to "the cause," immediately, and without loss of time, to write articles for said papers gratuitously, to circulate said pamphlets, to give favorable notices of said books, and instantly to find lucrative situations for hosts of distressed women who were tired of the humdrum treadmill of home-life, and who wished to have situations provided where there was no drudgery and no labor, but *very* liberal compensation. The whole large army of the *incapables*,—the blind, the halt, the lame, the weary, and the forlorn,—all seemed inclined to choose me as their captain, and to train under my banner. Because I had got into a subordinate position on the *Great Democracy*, they seemed to consider that it was my immediate business to make the *Great Democracy* serve their wants, or to perish in the attempt.

My friend, Ida Van Arsdel, was a serious, large-minded, large-brained woman, who had laid a deep and comprehensive plan of life, and was adhering to it with a patient and silent perseverance. Still she had no sympathy in that class of society where her lot was cast. Her mother and her Aunt Maria were women who lived and breathed merely in the opinions of their set and circle, and were as incapable of considering any higher ideal of life, or any unworldly purpose, as two canary-birds. Mr. Van Arsdel, a quiet, silent man, possessed a vein of good sense which led him to appreciate his eldest daughter at her real worth; and he was not insensible to the pleasure of having one feminine companion who, as he phrased it, "understood business," and with whom he could talk and advise understandingly. But even he had no sympathy with those larger views of the wants and needs of womanhood, in view of which Ida was acting. It followed very naturally that as Ida got no sympathy in her own circle, she was led to seek it in the widening sphere of modern reformers—a circle in which so much that is fine and excellent and practical, is inevitably mixed with a great deal that is crude and excessive.

At her request I accompanied her and Eva one evening to a sort of New-Dispensation *salon*, which was held weekly at the house of Mrs. Stella Cerulean. Mrs. Stella Cerulean was a brilliant woman—beautiful in person, full of genius, full of enthusiasm, full of self-confidence, the most charming of talkers, and the most fascinating of women. Her career from early life had been one of those dazzling successes which always fall to the lot of beauty, seconded by a certain amount of tact and genius. Of both these gifts Mrs. Cerulean had just enough to bewilder the head of any gentleman who made her acquaintance. She had in her girlhood made the tour of Europe, shone as a star in the courts of France and Russia, and might be excused for a more than ordinary share of complacency in her successes. In common with handsome women generally, she had, during the greater part of her life, never heard anything but flattery from gentlemen, and it always agreed with her remarkably well. But Mrs. Cerulean was one of those women, with just intellect and genius enough to render her impatient of the mere common-place triumphs of beauty. She felt the intoxicating power of the personal influence which she possessed, and aspired to reign in the region of the mind as well as to charm the senses. She felt herself called to the modern work of society regeneration, and went into it with all the enthusiasm of her nature, and with all that certainty of success which comes from an utter want of practical experience. Problems which old statesmen contemplated with perplexity, which had been the despair of ages, she took up with a cheerful alacrity.

She had one simple remedy for the reconstruction of society about whose immediate application she saw not the slightest difficulty. It was simply and only to be done by giving the affairs of the world into the hands of women, forthwith. Those who only claim *equality* for women were, in Mrs. Cerulean's view, far behind the age. Woman was the superior sex, the divine sex. Had not every gentleman of her acquaintance, since she could remember, told her this with regard to herself? Had they not always told her that she could know everything without study, simply by the divine intuitions of womanhood; that she could flash to conclusions without reasoning, simply by the brilliancy of her eyes; that her purity was incorruptible in its very nature; that all her impulses were heavenly and God-given? Naturally enough, then, it was her deduction that all that was wanting to heal the woes and wants of society was that she and other such inspired beings should immediately take to themselves their power, and *reign*.

Such is a general sketch of Mrs. Cerulean's view of the proper method of introducing the millennium. Meanwhile, she did her part in it by holding *salons* once a week, in which people entertaining similar views met for the purpose, apparently, of a general generation of gas, without any particular agreement as to the method in which it should be applied. This was the company of people to whom Eva rather pathetically alluded in one of her conversations once, as such nice people, who were so very puzzling to her, because no two of them ever seemed to think alike on any subject: and all agreed in opening their eyes very wide in astonishment if anybody quoted the Bible to them as an authority in faith and practice.

Ida was much courted and petted by this circle. And sensible, good girl as she was, she was not wholly without pleasure in the admiration they showed for her. Then, again, there were, every evening, ventilated in this company quantities of the most splendid and heroic ideas possible to human beings. The whole set seemed to be inspired with the spirit of martyrdom, without any very precise idea of how to get martyred effectually. It was only agreed that *everything* in the present state of society was *wrong*, and was to be pulled down forthwith. But as to what was to come after this demolition, there were as many opinions in the circle as there were persons, and all held with a wonderful degree of tenacity. A portion of them were of opinion that a new dispensation fresh from the heavenly realms was being inaugurated by means of spiritualistic communications daily and hourly conveyed to privileged individuals. It was, however, unfortunate that these communications were, very many of them, in point-blank opposition to each other; so that the introduction of revelations from the invisible world seemed only likely to make the confusion worse confounded. Then again, as to all the existing relations of life, there was the same charming variety of opinion. But one thing seemed to be pretty generally conceded among the whole circle, that in the good time coming, nobody was ever to do anything that he did not want to do, or feel at the moment just like doing. The great object of existence apparently was to get rid of everything that was disagreeable and painful. Thus, quite a party of them maintained that all marriage relations ought to drop, from the moment that either party ceased to take pleasure in them, without any regard to the interest of the other party or the children; because the fundamental law of existence was happiness—and nothing could make people happy but liberty to do just as they had a mind to.

I must confess that I found my evening at Mrs. Cerulean's *salon* a very agreeable one; the conversation of thoroughly emancipated people has a sparkling variety to it which is exactly the thing to give one a lively, pleasant evening. Everybody was full of enthusiasm, and in the very best of spirits. And there appeared to be nothing that anybody was afraid to say. Nobody was startled by anything. There was not a question, as it appeared, that had been agitated since the creation of the world, that was not still open to discussion.

As we were walking home after spending an evening, Ida asked me:

"Now, Mr. Henderson, what do you think of it?"

"Well, Miss Ida," said I, "after all, I'm a believer in the old-fashioned Bible."

"What, *really*, Mr. Henderson?"

"Really and squarely, Miss Ida. And never more so than when I associate with very clever people who have given it up. There is, to my mind, a want of common sense about all theories of life that are not built on that."

"Well," said Ida, "I have long since made up my mind, for my own part, that if the cause of woman is to be advanced in this world, it is not so much by meeting together and talking about it, as by each individual woman proposing to herself some good work for the sex, and setting about it patiently, and doing it quietly. That is rather my idea; at the same time, I like to hear these people talk, and they certainly are a great contrast to the vapid people that are called good society. There is a freshness and earnestness of mind about some of them that is really very interesting; and I get a great many new ideas."

"For my part," said Eva, "to be sure I have been a sad idler, but if I were going to devote myself to any work for women, it should be in the church, and under the guidance of the church. I am sure there is something we can do there. And then, one's sure of not running into all sorts of vagaries."

"Now," said Ida, "all I want is that women should do *something ;* that the lives of girls, from the time they leave school till the time they are married, should not be such a perfect waste as they now are. I do not profess to be certain about any of these theories that I hear; but one thing I do know: we women will bear being made a great deal more self-sustaining and self-supporting than we have been. We *can* be more efficient in the world, and we ought to be. I have chosen my way, and mean to keep to it. And my idea is that a woman who really does accomplish a life-work is just like one that cuts the first path through a wood. She makes a way where others can walk."

"That's you, Ida," said Eva; "but I am not strong enough to cut first paths."

I felt a little nervous flutter of her hand on my arm as she said this. It was in the dark, and involuntarily, I suppose, my hand went upon hers, and before I thought of it I felt the little warm thing in my own as if it had been a young bird. It was one of those things that people sometimes do before they know it. But I noticed that she did not withdraw her hand, and so I held it, querying in my own mind whether this little arrangement was one of the privileges of friendship. Before I quite resolved this question we parted at the house-door.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I RECEIVE A MORAL SHOWER-BATH.

A DAY or two after, as I was sitting in my room, busy writing, I heard a light footstep on the stairs, and a voice saying, "Oh yes! this is Mr. Henderson's room—thank you," and the next moment a jaunty, dashing young woman, with bold blue eyes, and curling brown hair, with a little wicked looking cap with nodding cock's-feather set askew on her head, came marching up and seated herself at my writing-table. I gazed in blank amazement. The apparition burst out laughing, and seizing me frankly by the hand, said—

"Look here, Hal! don't you know me? Well, my dear fellow, if you don't it's time you did! I read your last 'thingumajig' in the *Milky Way*, and came round to make your acquaintance."

I gazed in dumb amazement while she went on,

"My dear fellow, I have come to enlighten you,"—and as she said this she drew somewhat near to me, and laid her arm confidingly on my shoulder, and looked coaxingly in my face. The look of amazement which I gave, under these circumstances, seemed to cause her great amusement.

"Ha! ha!" she said, "didn't I tell 'em so? You ain't half out of the shell yet. You ain't really hatched. You go for the emancipation of woman; but bless you, boy, you haven't the least idea what it means--not a bit of it, sonny, have you now? Confess!" she said, stroking my shoulder caressingly.

"Really, madam—I confess," I said, hesitatingly, "I haven't the honor"—

"Not the honor of my acquaintance, you was going to say; well, that's exactly what you're getting now. I read your piece in the *Milky Way*, and, said I, that boy's in heathen darkness yet, and I'm going round to enlighten him. You mean well, Hal! but this is a great subject. You haven't seen through it. Lord bless you, child! you ain't a woman, and I am—that's just the difference."

Now, I ask any of my readers, what is a modest young man, in this nineteenth century,—having been brought up to adore and reverence woman as a goddess—to do, when he finds himself suddenly *vis-à-vis* with her, in such embarrassing relations as mine were becoming? I had heard before of Miss Audacia Dangyereyes, as a somewhat noted character in New York circles, but did not expect to be brought so unceremoniously, and without the least preparation of mind, into such very intimate relations with her.

"Now, look here, bub!" she said, "I'm just a-going to prove to you, in five minutes, that you've been writing about what you don't know anything about. You've been asserting, in your blind way, the rights of woman to liberty and equality; the rights of women, in short, to do anything that men do. Well, here comes a woman to your room who *takes* her rights, practically, and does just what a man would do. I claim my right to smoke, if I please, and to drink if I please; and to come up into your room and make you a call, and have a good time with you, if I please, and tell you that I like your looks, as I do. Furthermore, to invite you to come and call on me at my room. Here's my card. You may call me 'Dacia, if you like—I don't go on ceremony. Come round and take a smoke with me, this evening, won't you? I've got the nicest little chamber that ever you saw. What rent do you pay for yours? Say, will you come round?"

"Indeed—thank you, miss——"

"Call me 'Dacia for short. I don't stand on ceremony. Just look on me as another fellow. And now confess that you've been tied and fettered by those vapid conventionalities which bind down women till there is no strength in 'em. You visit in those false, artificial circles, where women are slaves, kept like canary birds in gilded cages. And you are afraid of your own principles when you see them carried out in a real free woman. Now, I'm a woman that not only dares say, but I dare *do*. Why hasn't a woman as much a right to go round and make herself agreeable to men, as to sit still at home and wait for men to come and make themselves agreeable to her? I know you don't like this, I can see you don't, but it's only because you are a slave to old prejudices. But I'm going to *make* you like me in spite of yourself. Come, now, be consistent with your principles; allow me my equality as a woman, a human being."

I was in such a state of blank amazement by this time as seemed to deprive me of all power of self-possession. At this moment the door opened, and Jim Fellows appeared. A most ludicrous grimace passed over his face as he saw the position and he cut a silent pirouette in the air, behind her. She turned her head, and he advanced.

"Fairest of the sex! (with some slight exceptions)—to what happy accident are we to attribute this meeting?"

"Hallo, Jim! is this you?" she replied.

"Oh, certainly, it's me," said Jim, seating himself familiarly. "How is the brightest star of womanhood—the Northern Light; the Aurora Borealis; the fairest of the fair? Bless its little heart, has it got its rights yet? Did it want to drink and smoke? Come along with Jim, now, and let's have a social cocktail."

"Keep your distance, sir," said she, giving him a slight box on his ear. "I prefer to do my own courting. I have been trying to show your friend here how little he knows of the true equality of women, and of the good time coming, when we shall have our rights, and do just as we darn please, as you do. I'll bet now there aint one of those Van Arsdel girls that would dare to do as I'm doing. But we're opening the way, sir, we're opening the way. The time will come when all women will be just as free to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as men."

"Good heavens!" said I, under my breath.

"My beloved Audacia," said Jim, "allow me to remark one little thing, and that is, that *men also* must be left free to the pursuit of happiness, and also, as the Scripture says, new wine must *not* be put into old bottles. Now my friend Hal—begging his pardon—is an old bottle, and I think you have already put as much new wine into him as his constitution will bear. And as he and I both have got to make our living by scratching, and *tempus fugit*, and we've got articles to write, and there is always, so to speak, *the devil* after us folks that write for the press, may I humbly request that you will withdraw the confusing light of your bright eyes from us for the present, and, in short, take your divine self somewhere else?"

As Jim spoke these words, he passed his arm round Miss Audacia's waist, and drew her to the door of the apartment, which he threw open, and handed her out, bowing with great ceremony.

"Stop!" she cried, "I aint going to be put out that way. I haven't done what I came for. You both of you have got to subscribe for my paper, *The Emancipated Woman*."

"Couldn't do it, divinest charmer," said Jim, "couldn't do it; too poor; mill runs low; no water; modest merit not rewarded. Wait till my ship comes in, and I'll subscribe for anything you like."

"Well, now, you don't get rid of me that way. I tell you I came in to get a subscription, and I am going to stay till I get one," said Miss Audacia. "Come, Hal," she said, crossing once more to me, and sitting down by me and taking my hand, "write your name there, there's a good fellow."

I wrote my name in desperation, while Jim stood by, laughing.

"Jim," I said, "come, put yours down quick, and let's have it over."

"Well, now," said she, "fork out the stamps—five dollars each."

We both obeyed mechanically.

"Well, well," said she, good-naturedly, "that'll do for this time, good morning," and she vanished from the apartment with a jaunty toss of the head and a nod of the cock's feathers in her hat.

Jim closed the door smartly after her.

"Mercy upon us! Jim," said I, "who and what is this creature?"

"Oh, one of the harbingers of the new millennium," said Jim. "Won't it be jolly when all the girls are like her? But we shall have to keep our doors locked then."

"But," said I, "is it possible, Jim, that this is a respectable woman?"

"She's precisely what you see," said Jim; "whether that's respectable, is a matter of opinion. There's a woman that's undertaken, in good faith, to run and jostle in all the ways that men run in. Her principle is, that whatever a young fellow in New York could do, she'll do."

"Good heavens!" said I, "what *would* the Van Arsdels think of us, if they should know that she had been in our company?"

"It's lucky that they don't, and can't," said Jim. "But you see what you get for belonging to the new dispensation."

"Boys, what's all this fuss?" said Bolton, coming in at this moment.

"Oh, nothing, only Dacia Dangyereyes has been here," said Jim, "and poor Hal is ready to faint away and sink through the floor. He isn't up to snuff yet, for all he writes such magnificent articles about the nineteenth century."

"Well," said I, "it was woman *as* woman that I was speaking of, and not this kind of creature. If I believed that granting larger liberty and wider opportunities was going to change the women we reverence to things like these, you would never find me advocating it."

"Well, my dear Hal," said Bolton, "be comforted; you're not the first reformer that has had to cry out, 'Deliver me from my friends.' Always when the waters of any noble, generous enthusiasm rise and overflow their banks, there must come down the drift-wood—the wood, hay, and stubble. Luther had more trouble with the fanatics of his day, who ran his principles into the ground, as they say, than he had with the Pope and the Emperor, both together. As to this Miss Audacia, she is one of the phenomenal creations of our times; this time, when every kind of practical experiment in life has got to be tried, and stand or fall on its own merits. So don't be ashamed of having spoken the truth, because crazy people and fools caricature it. It is true, as you have said, that women ought to be allowed a freer, stronger, and more generous education and scope for their faculties. It is true that they ought, everywhere, to have equal privileges with men; and because some crack-brained women draw false inferences from this, it is none the less true. For my part, I always said that one must have a strong conviction for a cause, if he could stand the things its friends say for it, or read a weekly paper devoted to it. If I could have been made a pro-slavery man, it would have been by reading anti-slavery papers, and *vice versa*. I had to keep myself on a good diet of pro-slavery papers, to keep my zeal up."

"But," said I, anxiously, to Jim, "do you suppose that we're going to be exposed to the visits of this young woman?"

"Well," said Jim, "as you've subscribed for her paper, perhaps she'll let us alone till she has some other point to carry."

"Subscribe!" said I; "I did it from compulsion, to get her out of the office; I didn't think the situation respectable; and yet I don't want her paper, and I don't want my name on her subscription list. What if the Van Arsdels should find it out? People are apt enough to think that our doctrines lead to all sorts of *outré* consequences; and if Mrs. Wouvermans, their Aunt Maria, should once get hold of this, and it should get all through the circle in which they move, how disagreeable it would be."

"Oh, never fear," said Jim; "I guess we can manage to keep our own secrets; and as to any of them ever knowing, or seeing, anything about that paper, it's out of the question. Bless you! they wouldn't touch it with a pair of tongs!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

AUNT MARIA.

AUNT MARIA came into the parlor where Eva and Alice were chatting over their embroidery. A glance showed that she had been occupied in that sensible and time-honored method of keeping up the social virtues, which is called making calls. She was all plumed and rustling in flowers and laces, and had on her calling manners. She had evidently been smiling and bowing and inquiring after people's health, and saying pretty and obliging things, till the very soul within her was quite dried up and exhausted. For it must be admitted that to be obliged to remember and inquire for every uncle, aunt and grandmother, every baby, and young master and miss in a circle of one's three hundred particular friends, is an exercise of Christian benevolence very fatiguing. Aunt Maria, however, always went through with it with exhaustive thoroughness, so that everybody said, What a kind-hearted, pleasant woman that Mrs. Wouvermans is.

"Well, there!" she said, throwing herself into an armchair, "I've nearly cleared my list, thank heaven! I think Lent is a grand good season to get these matters off your mind. You know Mr. Selwyn said last Sunday, that it was the time to bring ourselves up to the disagreeable duties."

"How many have you made, aunty?" said Eva.

"Just three dozen, my dear. You see I chose a nice day when a good many are sure to be out. That shortens matters a good deal. Well, girls, I've been to the Elmores'. You ought to see what a state they are in! In all my experience I never saw people so perfectly tipped over, and beside themselves with delight. I'm sure if I were they I wouldn't show it quite so plain."

"I suppose," said Alice, "they are quite benignant and patronizing to us now."

"Patronizing! Well, I wish you could have seen Poll Elmore and her airs! You would have thought her a duchess from the Faubourg St. Germain, and no less! She was so very sweet and engaging! Dear me, she patronized me within an inch of my life; and 'How are your dear girls?' she said. 'All the world is expecting to hear some news of Miss Eva, *should* we soon have an opportunity of returning congratulations?'"

"Oh, pshaw! aunt," said Eva uneasily, "what did you say?"

"Oh! I told her that Eva was in no hurry, that she was very reticent of her private affairs, and did not think it in good taste to proclaim them. 'Ah, then, there really is something in it,' said she. 'I was telling my girls perhaps after all it is mere report; people say so many things. The thing was reported about Maria,' she said, 'long before there was any truth in it'; and then she went on to tell me how much Maria had been admired, and how many offers she had rejected, and among other things she said that Mr. Sydney had been at her disposal,—only she couldn't fancy him. 'You know,' she said with a sentimental air, that 'the *heart* is all in such cases.'"

"How perfectly absurd of her," said Eva.

"I know," said Alice eagerly, "that Wat Sydney doesn't like Maria Elmore. She was perfectly wild after him, and used to behave so that it really disgusted him."

"Oh, well," said Eva, "all these things are excessively disagreeable to me; it seems to me where such matters are handled and talked about and bandied about, they become like shop-worn goods, utterly disgusting. Who wants every fool and fop and every gossip who has nothing better to do talking over what ought to be the most private and delicate affairs of one's own heart!"

"Well, dear, you can't help it in society. Why, every person where I have called inquired about your engagement to Wat Sydney. You see you *can't* keep a thing of this sort private. Of course you can't. You are in the world, and the world will have you do as others do. Of course I didn't announce it, because I have no authority; but the thing is just as much *out* as if I had. There was old Mrs. Ellis, dear old soul, said to me, 'Give my love to dear Eva, and tell her I hope she'll be happy. I suppose,' she added, 'I may send congratulations, though it isn't announced.' Oh, said I, Eva doesn't like to have matters of this sort talked about."

"But aunty," said Eva, who had been coloring with vexation, "this is all gratuitous—you are all engaging and marrying me in spite of my screams, as appears. I am not engaged to Mr. Sydney, and never expect to be; he is gone off on a long Southern tour, and I hope out of sight will be out of mind, and people will stop talking."

"But, my dear Eva, really now you ought not to treat a nice man like him in that way."

"Treat him in what way?" said Eva.

"Why, keep him along in this undecided manner without giving him a definite answer."

"He might have had a definite answer any time in the last three months if he had asked for it. It isn't my business to speak till I'm spoken to."

"You don't mean, Eva, that he has gone off without saying anything definite—bringing matters to a point."

"I do mean just that, Aunty, and what's more I'm glad he's gone, and I hope before he comes back he'll see somebody that he likes better, and then it'll be all off; and, Aunty, if any one speaks to you about it you'll oblige me by saying decidedly there is nothing in it."

"Well, I shan't say there never has been anything in it. I shall say you refused him."

"And why so? I am not anxious to have the credit of it, and besides I think it is indelicate when a man has paid a lady the highest possible compliment he can pay, to make a public parade of it. It's sufficient to say there is nothing in it and never will be; it's nobody's business how it happened."

"Oh, come, Eva, don't say there never will be anything in it. That is a subject on which girls are licensed to change their minds."

"For my part," said Alice, "I only wish it were I. I'd have him in a minute. Aunty, *did* you see that nobby phaeton he was driving the last day he was on the park; those horses, and that white fur lap-robe, with the long pluffy hair like silver? I must say, Eva, I think you are a little goose."

"I've no objection to the park phaeton, or horses or lap-robe; but it isn't those I'm to marry, you see."

"But, Eva," said Aunt Maria, "if you wouldn't fancy such a match as Wat Sydney, who would you? he is a man of correct and temperate habits, and that's more than you can say of half the men."

"But a woman doesn't necessarily want to make her most intimate and personal friend of a man merely because he doesn't drink," said Eva.

"But he's good-looking."

"So they say, but not to me, not my style. In short, aunty, *I don't love him,* and never should; and if I were tied too close to him might end by hating him. As it is, he and I are the best friends possible. I hope we always shall stay so."

"Well, I should like to know who ever will suit you, Eva," said Aunt Maria.

"Oh, he will come along, Aunty, never fear! I shall know him when I see him, and I dare say everybody will wonder what in the world possessed me, but *I* shall be content. I know exactly what I want, I'm like the old party in the Ancient Mariner. I shall know when I see him 'the man that must have me,' and then I shall 'hold him with my glittering eye.'"

"Well, Eva, you must remember one thing. There are not many men able to keep you in the way you always have lived."

"Then, when the right one comes I shall live as he is able to keep me."

"Go to housekeeping in three rooms, perhaps. You look like it."

"Yes; and do my own cooking. I'm rather fond of cooking; I have decided genius that way too. Ask Jane down in the kitchen if I don't make splendid fritters. The fact is, Aunty, I have so much superfluous activity and energy that I should be quite thrown away on a rich man. A poor country rector, very devout, with dark eyes like Longfellow's Kavanah, is rather my ideal. I would get up his surplices myself, and make him such lovely fontals and altar cloths! Why doesn't somebody of that sort come after me? I'm quite impatient to have a sphere and show what I can do."

"Well," said Alice, "you don't catch me marrying a poor man. Not I. No home missionaries, nor poor rectors, nor distressed artists need apply at this office."

"Now, girls," said Aunt Maria, "let me tell you it's all very pretty at your time of life to dream about love in a cottage and all that, but when you have seen all of life that I have, you will know the worth of the solid; when one has been used to a certain way of living, for example, one can't change; and if you married the angel Gabriel without money, you would soon repent it."

"Well," said Eva, "I'd risk it if Gabriel would have me, and I'd even try it with some man a little lower than the angels; so prepare your mind to endure it, Aunty, for one of these days everybody will be holding up their hands and saying, What, Eva Van Arsdel engaged to *him!* Why, what *could* have possessed her? That's just the way I heard Lottie Simmons talking last week about Belle St. John's engagement. She is going to marry a college professor in New Haven on one of those very homœopathic doses of salary that people give to really fine men that have talent and education, and she's just as happy as she can be about it, and the girls are all scraping their throats, 'oh-ing and ah-ing' and wondering what *could* have led her to it. No engagement ring *to show!* private wedding! and just going off together up to his mother's in Vermont instead of making the bridal tour of all the watering places! It must be so charming, you see, to be exhibited as a new bride, along with all the other new brides at Trenton and Niagara and the White Mountains, so that everybody may have a chance to compare your finery with everybody else's, also to see how you conduct yourself in new circumstances. For my part I shall be very glad if my poor rector can't afford it"

"By the by, speaking of that girl," said Aunt Maria, "what are you going to wear to the wedding? It's quite time you were attending to that. I called in at Tullegig's, and of course she was all in a whirl, but I put in for you. 'Now, Madame,' said I, 'you must leave a place in your mind for my girls,' and of course she went on with her usual French rodomontade, but I assure you you'll have to look after her. Tullegig has no conscience, and will put you off with anything she can make you take, unless you give your mind to it and follow her up."

"Well, I'm sure, Aunty, I don't feel equal to getting a new dress out of Tullegig," said Eva, with a sigh, "and I have dresses enough, any one of which will do. I am *blasée* with dresses, and I think weddings are a drug. If there's anything that I think downright vulgar and disagreeable it's this style of blaring, flaring, noisy, crowded, disagreeable modern weddings. It is a crush of finery; a smash of china; a confusion of voices; and everybody has the headache after it; it's a perfect infliction to think of being obliged to go to another. For my part I believe I am going to leave all those cares to Alice; she is come out now, and I am only Queen Dowager."

"Oh pshaw, Eva, don't talk so," said Aunt Maria, "and now I think of it you don't look well, you ought to take a tonic in the Spring. Let me see, Calisaya Bark and iron is just the thing. I'll send you in a bottleful from Jennings as I go home, and you must take a tablespoonful three times a day after eating, and be very particular not to fatigue yourself."

"I think," said Alice, "that Eva gets tired going to a those early services."

"Oh my dear child, yes; how can you think of such a thing? It's very inconsiderate in Mr. Selwyn, I think, to have so many services when he must know many weddings and things are coming off just after Easter. People will be all fagged out, just as Eva is. Now I believe in the church as much as anybody, but in our day I think there is danger in running religion to extremes."

"Ah!" said Eva, "I suppose there is no danger of one running to extremes in anything but religion—in dress or parties for instance?"

"But you know one has these things to attend to, my dear; one must keep up a certain style; and of course, there is a proper medium that I hold to as much as anybody. Nobody is more particular about religion in its place than I am. I keep Sunday strictly; very few people more so. I never ride in the park Sundays, nor write a letter, though I have seen people who called themselves religious that would. No. I believe in giving full observance to the Lord's day, but then I think one ought to have the week clear for action. That belongs to us, as I view it, and our old rector was very easy with us about all the Saint's days, and week-day services, and things in the prayer-book. To be sure there are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. One, of course, should attend to these, that is no more than is proper, but the way Mr. Selwyn goes on! why, one wouldn't be able to think of much else than religion if he had his way."

"What a dreadful state of society that would bring on!" said Eva.

"But come, Aunty," said Alice, "don't talk theology, tell us what discoveries you made at the Elmores'. I know they showed you everything."

"Oh, of course they did. Well, there's the wedding veil, cost two thousand dollars; for my part I thought it looked ordinary after all; it's so thick and stiff with embroidery, you see, no lightness to it."

"I wouldn't take it as a gift," said Eva. "I think such expensive things are simply vulgar."

"Go on, Aunty," said Alice, "what next?"

"Well, then the dress has a new style of trimming, and really is very elegant. I must do it the justice to say that it's something quite *recherché.* And then they took me up stairs to see the *trousseau,* and there was a perfect bazar! all her things laid out by dozens and tied up with pink ribbons,—you would have thought it got for the Empress. Those Elmores are the most worldly family I ever did hear of; all for dash and show! They seemed to be perfectly transported with these things,—and that reminds me, Eva, I noticed last Sunday at church your new poplin suit was made with quillings; now they are not going to wear quillings any more. I noticed none of those Paris dresses had it. You should have Jacobs alter yours at once, and substitute fringes; fringes is the style now."

"And, Aunty, what do you suppose would happen to me if I should wear quillings when THEY don't?" said Eva.

"Well, of course, you don't want to be odd, child. There is a certain propriety in all these things. I will speak to Jacobs about it, and send him up here. Shall I?"

"Well, Aunty, anything to suit you. You may take off quillings, or put on fringe, if you won't insist on marrying me to anybody," said Eva; "only I do wish any one fashion would last long enough to give one time to breathe and turn round before it has to be altered; but the Bible says the fashion of this world passeth quickly away, and so I suppose one must put up with it."

"Eva, do you correspond with Mr. Sydney?" said Aunt Maria, after a moment's reflection.

"Correspond? No, to be sure I don't. What should I do that for?"

"He writes to mamma, though," said Alice, laughing.

"It's his own affair, if he does," said Eva. "I told him, before he went, I never corresponded with gentlemen. I believe that is the correct thing to say. I never mean to, either, unless it's with one whose letters are particularly interesting to me."

"How do you like that young Henderson?"

"What, Ida's admirer?" said Eva, coloring. "Oh, we think him nice enough. Don't we, Alice?—rather jolly, in fact."

"And does Ida continue gracious?"

"Certainly. They are the best of friends," said Eva. "The fact is, he is quite a fine fellow; and he reads things to Ida, and she advises him about his style, you know."

"He and Jim Fellows always come together," said Alice; "and I think they are both nice—in fact, rather better than the average. He isn't quite such a rattle-cap as Jim, but one trusts him more."

"Well," said Eva, "I don't like a professed joker. A man that never is in earnest ought to wear the cap and bells, as the court fools used to do in old times."

"Oh, bless you, child," said Alice, "that's what Jim is for; he always makes me laugh, and I like to laugh."

"Don't you think that Mr. Henderson would do nicely for Ida?" said Aunt Maria.

"Oh, as to that," said Alice, "neither he nor Jim Fellows are marrying men. You see they haven't anything, and of course that they can't be thinking of such things."

"But," said Aunt Maria, "Ida is just the wife for a poor man. She has a turn for economy, and doesn't care for dress and show; and could rub and scrub along, and help to support the family. I really think she likes work for the sake of it. I wish to mercy she could be engaged, and get all these dreadful queer plans and notions out of her head. I am always so puzzled what in the world to tell people when they ask why she doesn't visit and go into society."

"Why not tell the truth," said Eva, "that she prefers to help papa in his business?"

"Because, love, that's so odd. People can't understand it."

"They can't understand," said Eva, "that a woman may be tired of leading a lazy life, and want to use her faculties. Well, I'm sure *I* can understand it. I'd give all the world to feel that I was of as much real use to anybody as Ida is to papa; and I think papa likes it too. Poor, dear old papa, with his lovely old white head, who just toils and slaves for us. I wish I could help him too."

"Well, dear, I can tell you how you can help him."

"How?"

"Marry Wat Sydney."

"Nonsense, Aunt, what has that to do with papa?"

"It would have more to do than you think," said Aunt Maria, shaking her head mysteriously.

CHAPTER XXV.

A DISCUSSION OF THE WOMAN QUESTION FROM ALL POINTS.

THE bold intrusion of Miss Audacia Dangereyes into my apartment had left a most disagreeable impression on my mind. This was not lessened by the reception of her paper, which came to hand in due course of next mail; and which I found to be an exposition of all the wildest principles of modern French communism. It consisted of attacks directed about equally against Christianity, marriage, the family state, and all human laws and standing order, whatsoever. It was much the same kind of writing with which the populace of France was indoctrinated and leavened in the era preceding the first revolution, and which in time bore fruit in blood. In those days, as now, such doctrines were toyed with in literary *salons* and aristocratic circles, where their novelty formed an agreeable stimulus in the vapid common-place of fashionable life. They were then, as now, embraced with enthusiasm by fair illuminati, who fancied that they saw in them a dawn of some millennial glory; and were awakened from their dream, like Madame Roland, at the foot of the guillotine, bowing their heads to death and crying, "O Liberty, what things are done in thy name!"

The principal difference between the writers on the *Emancipated Woman*, and those of the French illuminati, was that the French prototypes were men and women of elegance, culture, and education; whereas their American imitators, though not wanting in a certain vigor and cleverness, were both coarse in expression, narrow in education, and wholly devoid of common decency in their manner of putting things. It was a paper that a man who reverenced his mother and sisters could scarcely read alone in his own apartments without blushing with indignation and vexation.

Every holy secret of human nature, all those subjects of which the grace and the power consist in their exquisite delicacy and tender refinement, were here handled with coarse fingers. Society assumed the aspect of a pack of breeding animals, and all its laws and institutions were to return to the mere animal basis.

It was particularly annoying to me that this paper, with all its coarseness and grossness, set itself up to be the head leader of Woman's Rights; and to give its harsh clamors as the voice of woman. Neither was I at all satisfied with the manner in which I had been dragooned into taking it, and thus giving my name and money to its circulation. I had actually been bullied into it; because, never having contemplated the possibility of such an existence as a female bully, I had marked out in my mind no suitable course of conduct adequate to the treatment of one. "What *should* I have done?" I said to myself. "What *is* a man to do under such circumstances? Shall he engage in a personal scuffle? Shall he himself vacate his apartment, or shall he call in a policeman?"

The question assumed importance in my eyes, because it was quite possible that, having come once, she might come again; that the same course of conduct might be used to enforce any kind of exaction which she should choose to lay on me. But, most of all was I sensitive, lest by any means some report of it might get to the Van Arsdels. My trepidation may then be guessed, on having the subject at once proposed to me by Mr. Van Arsdel that evening as I was sitting with him and Ida in her study.

"I want to know, Mr. Henderson," he said, "if you are a subscriber for the *Emancipated Woman*, the new organ of the Woman's Rights party?"

"Now, papa," said Ida, "that is a little unjust! It only *professes* to be an organ of the party, but it is not recognized by us."

"Have you seen the paper?" said Mr. Van Arsdel to me.

Like a true Yankee I avoided the question by asking another.

"Have *you* subscribed to it, Mr. Van Arsdel?"

"Well, yes," said he laughing, "I confess I have; and a pretty mess I have made of it. It is not a paper that any decent man ought to have in his house. But the woman came herself into my counting-room and, actually, she badgered me into it; I couldn't get her out. I didn't know what to do with her. I never had a woman go on so with me before. I was flustered, and gave her my five dollars to get rid of her. If she had been a man I'd have knocked her down."

"Oh, papa," said Ida, "I'll tell you what you should have done; you should have called *me*. She'd have got no money and no subscriptions out of me, nor you either if I'd been there."

"Now, Mr. Henderson, misery loves company; has she been to your room?" said Mr. Van Arsdel.

"I confess she has," said I, "and that I have done just what you did—yielded at once."

"Mr. Henderson, all this sort of proceeding is thoroughly vexatious and disagreeable," said Ida; "and all the more so that it tends directly to injure all women who are trying to be self-supporting and independent. It destroys that delicacy and refinement of feeling which men, and American men especially, cherish toward women, and will make the paths of self-support terribly hard to those who have to tread them. There really is not the slightest reason why a woman should cease to be a woman because she chooses to be independent and pursue a self-supporting career. And claiming a right to dispense with womanly decorums and act like a man is just as ridiculous as it would be for a man to claim the right to wear woman's clothes. Even if we supposed that society were so altered as to give to woman every legal and every social right that man has; and if all the customs of society should allow her to do the utmost that she can for herself, in the way of self-support, still, women will be relatively weaker than men, and there will be the same propriety in their being treated with consideration and delicacy and gentleness that there now is. And the assumptions of these hoydens and bullies have a tendency to destroy that feeling of chivalry and delicacy on the part of men. It is especially annoying and galling to me, because I do propose to myself a path different from that in which young women in my position generally have walked; and such reasoners as Aunt Maria and all the ladies of her circle will not fail to confound Miss Audacia's proceedings and opinions, and mine, as all belonging to the same class. As to the opinions of the paper, it is mainly by the half truths that are in it that it does mischief. If there were not real evils to be corrected, and real mistakes in society, this kind of thing would have no power. As it is, I have no doubt that it will acquire a certain popularity and do immense mischief. I think the elements of mischief and confusion in our republic are gathering as fast as they did in France before the revolution."

"And," said I, "after all, republics are on trial before the world. Our experiment is not yet two hundred years old, and we have all sorts of clouds and storms gathering—the labor question, the foreign immigration question, the woman question, the monopoly and corporation question, all have grave aspects."

"You see, Mr. Henderson," said Ida, "as to this woman question, the moderate party to which I belong is just at that disadvantage that people always are when there is a party on ahead of them who hold some of their principles and are carrying them to every ridiculous extreme. They have to uphold a truth that is constantly being brought into disrepute and made ridiculous by these ultra advocates. For my part, all I can do is to go quietly on with what I knew was right before. What is right *is* right, and remains right no matter how much ultraists may caricature it."

"Yes, my daughter," said Mr. Van Arsdel, "but what would become of our country if all the women could vote, and people like Miss Audacia Dangyereyes should stump the country as candidates for election?"

"Well, I am sure," said Ida, "we should have very disagreeable times, and a great deal to shock us."

"It is not merely that," said Mr. Van Arsdel; "the influence of such women on young men would be demoralizing."

"When I think of such dangers," said Ida, "I am, on the whole, very well pleased that there is no immediate prospect of the suffrage being granted to women until a generation with superior education and better balanced minds and better habits of consecutive thought shall have grown up among us. I think the gift of the ballot will come at last as the result of a superior culture and education. And I am in no hurry for it before."

"What is all this that you are talking about?" said Eva, who came into the room just at this moment. "Ma and Aunt Maria are in such a state about that paper that Papa has just brought home! They say there are most horrid things in it, Mr. Henderson; and they say that it belongs to the party which you, and Ida, and all your progressive people are in."

"It is an excrescence of the party," said I; "a diseased growth; and neither Miss Ida nor I will accept of it as any expression of our opinion, though it does hold some things which we believe."

"Well," said Eva, "I am curious to see it, just because they don't want I should. What can there be in it so very bad?"

"You may as well keep out of it, chick," said her father, caressing her. "And now, I'll tell you, Ida, just what I think; you *good* women are not fit to govern the world, because you do not know, and you oughtn't to know, the wickedness that you have got to govern. We men have to know all about the rogues, and the sharpers, and the pickpockets, and the bullies; we have to grow hard and sharp, and 'cut our eye-teeth,' as the saying is, so that at last we come to not having much faith in anybody. The rule is, pretty much, not to believe anybody that you meet, and to take for granted that every man that you have dealings with will cheat you if he can. That's bad enough, but when it comes to feeling that every *woman* will cheat you if she can, when women cut their eye-teeth, and get to be sharp, and hard, and tricky, as men are, then I say, Look out for yourself, and deliver me from having anything to do with them."

"Why, really!" said Eva, "papa is getting to be quite an orator. I never heard him talk so much before. Papa, why don't you go on to the platform at the next Woman's Rights Convention, and give them a good blast?"

"Oh, I'll let them alone," said Mr. Van Arsdel; "I don't want to be mixed up with them, and I don't want my girls to be, either. Now, I do not object to what Ida is doing, and going to do. I think there is real sense in that, although Mother and Aunt Maria feel so dreadfully about it. I like to see a woman have pluck, and set herself to be good for something in the world. And I don't see why there shouldn't be women doctors; it is just the thing there ought to be. But I don't go for all this hurrah and hullaballoo, and pitching women head-first into politics, and sending them to legislatures, and making them candidates for Congress, and for the Presidency, and nobody knows what else."

"Well," said I, "why not a woman President, as well as a woman Queen of England?"

"Because," said he, "look at the difference. The woman Queen in England comes to it quietly; she is born to it, and there is no fuss about it. But whoever is set up to be President of the United States is just set up to have his character torn off from his back in shreds, and to be mauled, pummeled, and covered with dirt by every filthy paper all over the country. And no woman that was not willing to be dragged through every kennel, and slopped into every dirty pail of water, like an old mop, would ever consent to run as a candidate. Why, it's an ordeal that kills a man. It killed Gen. Harrison, and killed old Zack. And what sort of a brazen tramp of a woman would it be that could stand it, and come out of it without being killed? Would it be any kind of a woman that we should want to see at the head of our government? I tell you, it's quite another thing to be President of a democratic republic, from what it is to be hereditary Queen."

"Good for you, papa!" said Eva, clapping her hands. "Why, how you go on! I never did hear such eloquence. No, Ida, set your mind at rest, you shan't be run for President of the United States. You are a great deal too good for that."

"Now," said Mr. Van Arsdel, "there's your friend, Mrs. Cerulean, tackled me the other night, and made a convert of me, she said. Bless me! she's a handsome woman, and I like to hear her talk. And if we didn't live in the world we do, and things weren't in any respect what they are, nothing would be nicer than to let her govern the world. But in the great rough round of business she's nothing but a pretty baby after all,—nothing else in the world. We let such women convert us, because we like to have them around. It amuses us, and don't hurt them. But you can't let your baby play with matches and gunpowder, if it wants to ever so much. Women are famous for setting things agoing that they don't know anything about. And then, when the explosion comes, they don't know what did it, and run screaming to the men."

"As to Mrs. Cerulean," said Eva, "I never saw anybody that had such a perfectly happy opinion of herself, as she has. She always thinks that she understands everything by intuition. I believe in my heart that she'd walk into the engine-room of the largest steamship that ever was navigated, and turn out the chief engineer and take his place.

if he'd let her. She'd navigate by woman's God-given instincts, as she calls them."

"And so she'd keep on till she'd blown up the ship," said Mr. Van Arsdel.

"Well," said I, "one fact is to be admitted, that men, having always governed the world, must by this time have acquired a good deal of traditional knowledge of the science of government, and of human nature, which women can't learn by intuition in a minute."

"For my part," said Ida, "I never was disposed to insist on the *immediate* granting of political rights to women. I think that they *are* rights, and that it is very important for the good of society that these rights should finally be respected. But I am perfectly willing, for my part, to wait and come to them in the way, and at the time, that will be best for the general good. I would a great deal rather come to them by gradual evolution than by destructive revolution. I do not want them to be forced upon society, when there is so little preparation among women that they will do themselves no credit by it. All history shows that the most natural and undeniable human rights may be granted and maintained in a way that will just defeat themselves, and bring discredit on all the supporters of them, just as was the case with the principles of democratic liberty in the first French Revolution. I do not want the political rights of woman advocated in a manner that will create similar disturbances, and bring a lasting scandal on what really is the truth. I do not want women to have the ballot till they will do themselves credit and improve society by it. I like to have the subject proposed, and argued, and agitated, and kept up, in hopes that a generation of women will be educated for it. And I think it is a great deal better and safer, where it can be done, to have people educated *for* the ballot, than to have them educated *by* the ballot."

"Well, Ida, there's more sense in you than in the most of 'em," said Mr. Van Arsdel.

"Yes," said Ida, "I think that an immediate rush into politics of such women as we have now, without experience or knowledge of political economy of affairs, would be, as Eva says, just like women's undertaking to manage the machinery of a large steamer by feminine instincts. I hope never to see women in public life till we have had a generation of women who have some practical familiarity with the great subjects which are to be considered, about which now the best instructed women know comparatively nothing. The question which mainly interests me at present is a humanitarian one. It's an absolute fact that a great portion of womankind have their own living to get; and they do it now, as a general rule, with many of the laws and institutions of society against them. The reason of this is, that all these laws and institutions have been made by men, without any consent or concurrence of theirs. Now, as women are different from men, and have altogether a different class of feelings and wants and necessities, it certainly is right and proper that they should have some share in making the laws with which they are to be governed. It is true that the laws have been made by fathers and brothers and husbands; but no man, however near, ever comprehends fully the necessities and feelings of women. And it seems to me that a State where all the laws are made by men, without women, is just like a family that is managed entirely by fathers and brothers, without any concurrence of mothers and sisters. That's my testimony, and my view of the matter."

"I don't see," said Eva, "if women are to make the laws in relation to their own interests, or to have a voice in making them, why they need go into politics with men in order to do it, or why they need cease to act like women. If the thing has got to be done, I would have a parliament of women meet by themselves, and deliberate and have a voice in all that concerns the State. There, that's my contribution to the programme."

"That's the way the Quakers manage their affairs in their yearly meetings," said Ida. "I remember I was visiting Aunt Dinah once, during a yearly meeting, and learned all about it. I remember the sisters had a voice in everything that was done. The Quaker women have acquired in this way a great deal of facility in the management of business, and a great knowledge of affairs. They really seem to me superior to the men."

"I can account for that," said I. "A man among the Quakers is restricted and held in, and hasn't as much to cultivate and develop him as ordinary men in the world; whereas, woman, among the Quakers, has her sphere widened and developed."

At this moment our conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Jim Fellows. He seemed quite out of breath and excited, and had no sooner passed the compliments of the evening, than he began.

"Well," said he, "Hal, I have just come from the Police Court, where there's a precious row. Our friend Dacia Dangyereyes is up for blackmailing and swindling; and there's a terrible wash of dirty linen going on. I was just in time to get the very earliest notes for our paper."

"Good!" said Mr. Van Arsdel. "I hope the creature is caught at last."

"Never believe that," said Jim. "She has as many lives as a cat. They never'll get a hold on her. She'll talk 'em all round."

"Disgusting!" said Ida.

"Ah!" said Jim, "it's part of the world as it goes. She'll come off with flying colors, doubtless, and her cock's feathers will be flaunting all the merrier for it."

"How horribly disagreeable," said Eva, "to have such women around. It makes one ashamed of one's sex."

"I think," said Ida, "there is not sufficient resemblance to a real woman in her to make much trouble on her account. She's an amphibious animal, belonging to a transition period of human society."

"Well," said Jim, "if you'll believe it, Mrs. Cerulean and two or three of the ladies of her set are actually going to invite Dacia to their *salon*, and patronize her."

"Impossible!" said Ida, flushing crimson; "it *cannot* be!'

"Oh, you don't know Mrs. Cerulean," said Jim; "Dacia called on her with her newspaper, and conducted herself in a most sweet and winning manner, and cast herself at her feet for patronage; and Mrs. Cerulean, regarding her through those glory spectacles which she usually wears, took her up immediately as a promising candidate for the latter-day. Mrs. Cerulean don't see anything in Dacia's paper that, properly interpreted, need make any trouble; because, you see, as she says, *everything ought to be love*, everywhere, above and below, under and over, up and down, top and side and bottom, ought to be *love*, LOVE. And then when there's general all-overness and all-throughness, and an entire mixed-up-ativeness, then the infinite will come down into the finite, and the finite will overflow into the infinite, and, in short, Miss Dacia's cock's feathers will sail right straight up into heaven, and we shall see her cheek by jowl with the angel Gabriel, promenading the streets of the new Jerusalem. That's the programme. Meanwhile, Dacia's delighted. She hadn't the remotest idea of being an angel, or anything of the sort; but since good judges have told her she is, she takes it all very contentedly."

"Oh," said Ida, "it really can't be true, Mr. Fellows; it really is impossible that such ladies as Mrs. Cerulean's set—ladies of family and position, ladies of real dignity and delicacy—are going to indorse the principles of that paper; principles which go to the immediate dissolution of civilized society."

"That's just what they are doing," said Jim; "and they are having a glorious high old time doing it too. Mrs. Cerulean herself intends to write for the paper on the subject of fortyfication and twentification and unification, and everything else that ends with *ation*. And it is thought it will improve the paper to have some nice little hymns inserted in it, to the tune of 'I Want to be an Angel.' I asked Mrs. Cerulean what if my friend Dacia should rip an oath in the midst of one of her *salons*—you know the little wretch does swear like a pirate; and you ought to see how serenely she looked over my head into the far distant future, and answered me so tenderly, as if I had been a two hours' chicken peeping to her. 'Oh, James,' says she, 'there are many opinions yet to be expressed on the subject of what is commonly called profanity. I have arrived at the conclusion myself, that in impassioned natures, what is called profanity, is only the state of prophetic exaltation which naturally seeks vent in intensified language. I shouldn't think the worse of this fine vigorous creature if, in a moment's inspired frenzy, she should burst the tame boundaries of ordinary language. It is true, the vulgar might call it profane. It requires anointed eyes to see such things truly. When we have risen to these heights where we now stand, we behold all things purified. There is around us a new heaven and a new earth.' And so you see, Dacia Dangyereyes turns out a tip-top angel of the new dispensation."

"Well," said Ida, rising, with heightened color, "this, of course, ends my intercourse with Mrs. Cerulean, if it be true."

"But," said Eva, "how can they bear the scandal of this disgraceful trial? This certainly will open their eyes."

"Oh," said Jim, "you will see, Mrs. Cerulean will adhere all the closer for this. It's persecution, and virtue in all ages has been persecuted; therefore, all who are persecuted, are virtuous. Don't you see the logical consistency? And then, don't the Bible say, 'Blessed are ye when men persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you?'"

"It don't appear to me," said Ida, "that she can so far go against all common sense."

"*Common* sense!" said Jim; "Mrs. Cerulean and her clique have long since risen above anything like common sense; all their sense is of the most uncommon kind, and relates to a region somewhere up in the clouds, where everything is made to match. They live in an imaginary world, and reason with imaginary reasons, and see people through imaginary spectacles, and have glorious good times all the while. All I wish is, that I could get up there and live; for you see I get into the state of prophetic ecstasy pretty often with this confounded hard grind below here, and then, when I rip out a naughty word, nobody sees the beauty of it. Mother looks glum. Sister Nell says, 'Oh, Jim!' and looks despairing."

"But the fact is," said Mr. Van Arsdel, "Mrs. Cerulean is a respectable woman, of respectable family, and this girl is a tramp; that's what she is; and it is absolutely impossible that Mrs. Cerulean can know what she is about."

"Well, I delicately suggested some-such thing to Mrs. Cerulean," said Jim; "but, bless me! the way she set me down! Says she, 'Do you men ever inquire into the character of people that you unite with to carry your purposes? You join with anybody that will help you, without regard to antecedents!'"

"She don't speak the truth," said Mr. Van Arsdel. "We men are very particular about the record of those we join with to carry our purposes. You wouldn't find a board of bankers taking a man that had a record for swindling, or a man that edited a paper arguing against all rights of property. Doctors won't admit a man among them who has the record of a quack or a malpractitioner. Clergymen won't admit a man among them who has a record of licentiousness or infidel sentiments. And if women will admit women, in utter disregard to their record of chastity, or their lax principles as to the family, they act on lower principles than any body of men."

"Besides," said I, "that kind of tolerance cuts the very ground from under the whole woman movement; for the main argument for proposing it, was to introduce into politics that superior delicacy and purity, which women manifest in family life. But if women are going to be less careful about delicacy and decorum and family purity than men are, the quagmire of politics, foul enough now, will become putrid."

"Oh, come," said Eva, "the subject does get too dreadful; I can't bear to think of it, and I move that we have a game of whist, and put an end to it. Come, now, do let's sit down sociably, and have something agreeable."

We went out into the parlor and sat down to the whist-table, Eva and Alice, with Jim Fellows and myself respectively as partners, and indulged ourselves in one of those agreeable chatty games which make the designation "whist" quite an amusing satire—one of those games played with that charming disregard of all rules which is so inspiring. In the best of spirits we talked across the table to each other, trumped our partners' queens, and did all sorts of enormities in the excitement of the brilliant by-play of conversation which we kept up all the while. It may be a familiar experience to many, that one never thinks of so many things to say, and so many fruitful topics for immediate discussion, as when one professes to be playing whist. But then, if a young gentleman wishes a good opportunity to reconnoiter a certain face, no more advantageous position can be given him than to have it *vis-à-vis* at the whist-table.

"Now, Mr. Henderson," said Alice, "we are going to make a good churchman of you."

"I am happy to hear it," said I. "I am ready to be made anything good of, that you can mention."

"Well," said Alice, "we are going to press you and Mr. Fellows, here, into the service of the church."

"Shall be perfectly enchanted!" said Jim. "If the church only knew my energies, they would have tried to get me long before."

"Then," said Eva, "you must go with us to-morrow evening; for we are going to be up all night, about the floral decorations of our church for Easter morning. Oh! you have no idea what splendid things we are going to do. We shall be at work hard, all day to-morrow, upon our wreaths and crosses; and the things must all be put up late at night so as to keep them from withering. Then, you know, we must be out again to the sunrise service."

"Why," said I, "it is a regular piece of dissipation."

"Certainly,—religious dissipation, you know," said Alice.

"Well," said Eva, "I don't know why we should not be up all night to dress the church, for once in our lives, as well as to be up all night dancing the German. Ida says it is wicked to do either. Ida makes a perfect hobby of everybody's keeping their health."

"Yes, but," said I, "if people keep themselves, generally, in temperance and soberness, they can afford a great strain, now and then, if it be for a good purpose."

"At any rate," said Eva, "you and Mr. Fellows come round and take tea with us and help us carry our trophies to the church."

CHAPTER XXVI.

COUSIN CAROLINE AGAIN.

ABOUT this time I received the following letter from my Cousin Caroline:

"*Dear Cousin:*—I have had no time to keep up correspondence with anybody for the past year. The state of my father's health has required my constant attention, day and night, to a degree that has absorbed all my power, and left no time for writing. For the last six months father has been perfectly helpless with the most distressing form of chronic rheumatism. His sufferings have been protracted and intense, so that it has been wearing even to witness them; and the utmost that I could do seemed to bring very little relief. And when, at last, death closed the scene, it seemed to be in mercy, putting an end to sufferings which were intolerable.

"For a month after his death, I was in a state of utter prostration, both physical and mental,—worn out with watching and care. My poor father; he was himself to the last, reticent, silent, undemonstrative and uncommunicative. It seemed to me that I would have given worlds for one tender word from him. I felt a pity and a love that I dared not show; his sufferings went to my very heart; but he repelled every word of sympathy, and was cold and silent to the last. Yet I believe that he really loved me, and that far within this frozen circle of ice his soul was a lonely prisoner, longing to express itself, and unable; longing for the light and warmth of that love which never could touch him in its icy depths; and I am quite sure, it is my comfort to know, that death has broken the ice and melted the bands; and I believe that he has entered the kingdom of heaven as a little child.

"The hard skies of our New England, its rocky soil, its severe necessities, make characters like his; and they intrench themselves in a similar religious faith which makes them still harder. They live to aspire and to suffer, but never to express themselves; and every soft and warm heart that is connected with them pines and suffers and dies like flowers that are thrown upon icebergs.

"Well, all is now over, and I am free of the world. I have, in the division of the property, a few acres of wood-lot, and many acres of rough, stony land, and about a hundred dollars of yearly income. I must do something, therefore, for my own support. Ever since you left us I have been reading and studying under the care of your uncle, who, since your conversation with him, has been very kind and thoughtful. But then, of course, my studies have been interrupted by some duties, and, during the last year, suspended altogether by the necessity of giving myself to the care of father.

"Now, my desire is, if I could in any way earn the means, to go to France and perfect myself in medical studies. I am told that a medical education can be obtained there by women cheaper than anywhere else; and I have cast about in my own mind how I might earn money enough to enable me to do it. Now I ask you, who are in New York and on the press, who know me thoroughly, and it also, could I, should I come to New York, gain any situation as writer for the press, which would give me an income for a year or two, by which I could make enough to accomplish my purpose? I should not wish to be always a writer; it would be too exhausting; but if I could get into a profession that I am well adapted for, I should expect to succeed in it.

"I have the ability to live and make a respectable appearance upon a very little. I know enough, practically, of the arts of woman-craft to clothe myself handsomely for a small sum, and I am willing to live in cheap obscure lodgings, and think I could board myself, also, for a very moderate sum. I am willing to undergo privations, and to encounter hard work to carry my purpose, and I write to you, dear cousin, because I know you will speak to me just as freely as though I were not a woman, and give me your unbiased opinion as to whether or no I could do anything in the line that I indicate. I know that you would give me all the assistance in your power, and feel a perfect reliance upon your friendship."

The letter here digressed into local details and family incidents not necessary to be reproduced. I resolved to lay it before Bolton. It seemed to me that his reception of it would furnish some sort of clew to the mystery of his former acquaintance with her. The entire silence that he had always maintained with regard to his former knowledge of her, while yet he secretly treasured her picture, seemed to me to indicate that he might somehow have been connected with that passage of her life referred to by my mother when she said that Caroline's father had, at one period of her life, crushed out an interest that was vital to her.

"The sly old fox," said I to myself, "always draws me on to tell him everything, while he keeps a close mouth, and I learn nothing of him." Of course, I felt that to ask any questions or seek to pry into a past which he evidently was not disposed to talk about, would be an indelicate impertinence. But my conscience and sense of honor were quite appeased by this opportunity presented by Caroline's letter. Bolton was older in the press than I, and, with all his reticence and modesty, had a wide circle of influence. He seemed contented to seek nothing for himself; but I had had occasion to notice in my own experience that he was not boasting idly when he said, on our first acquaintance, that he had some influence in literary quarters. He had already procured for me, from an influential magazine, propositions for articles which were both flattering to

BOLTON'S ASYLUM.

"'*Halloo, Bolton!' said I. 'Have you got a foundling hospital here?'*"

my pride and lucrative in the remuneration. In this way, the prospect of my yearly income, which on the part of the *Great Democracy* was so very inadequate, was enlarged to a very respectable figure.

I resolved, therefore, to go up to Bolton's room and put this letter into his hands. I knocked at the door, but no one answering I opened it and went in. He was not there, but an odd enough scene presented itself to me. The little tow-headed, freckled boy, that I had formerly remarked as an inmate of the apartment, was seated by the fire with a girl, somewhat younger than himself, nursing between them a large fat bundle of a baby.

"Hallo," said I, "what have we here? What are you doing here?" At this moment—before the children could answer—I heard Bolton coming up the stairs. He entered the room; a bright color mounted to his cheeks as he saw the group by the fire, and me.

"Hallo, Hal!" he said, with a sort of conscious laugh.

"Hallo, Bolton!" said I. "Have you got a foundling hospital here?"

"Oh, well, well," said he; "never mind; let 'em stay there. Do you want anything? There," said he, pulling a package of buns out of his pocket, "eat those; and when the baby gets asleep you can lay her on the bed in the other room. And there,"—to the boy,—"you read this story aloud to your sister when the baby is asleep. And now Hal, what can I do for you? Suppose I come down into your room for awhile and talk?"

He took my arm, and we went down the stairs together; and when we got into my room he shut the door and said:

"The fact is, Hal, I have to take care of that family—my washerwoman, you know. Poor Mrs. Molloy, she has a husband that about once a month makes a perfect devil of himself, so that the children are obliged to run and hide for fear of their lives. And then she has got the way of sending them to me, and I have to go down and attend to him."

"Bless me!" said I, "why will women live with such brutes? Why don't you make her separate from him?"

Bolton seated himself at my table, and leaned back in his chair, with a curious expression of countenance, very sad, yet not without a touch of humor in it.

"Well, you see," he said, "the fact is, Hal, she loves him.'

"Well, she oughtn't to love him," said I.

"May be not; but she does," said he. "She loves that poor Pat Molloy so much that to be angry with him is just like your right hand being angry with your left hand. Suppose there's a great boil on the left hand, what's the right to do about it but simply bear the suffering and wait for it to get well? That, you see, is love; and because of it, you can't get women away from their husbands. What are you going to do about it?"

"But," said I, "it is perfectly absurd for a woman to cling to such a man."

"Well," said Bolton, "three weeks of the month Pat Molloy is just as kind and tender a father and husband as you will find, and then by the fourth week comes around his drunken spell, and he's a devil. Now she says, 'Sure sir, it's the drink. It's not Pat at all, sir; he's not himself, sir.' And she waits till it's over—taking care that he doesn't kill the children. Now, shall I persuade her to let him go to the devil? Does not Jesus Christ say, 'Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost'? He said it about a basket of bread; wouldn't he say it still more about the fragments of the human soul? If she leaves Pat, where will he go to? First, to some harlot, then to murder, and the gallows—and that gets him out of the way."

"Well," said I, "isn't he better out than in?"

"Who knows?" said Bolton. "All I have to say is, that poor Molly Molloy, with her broad Irish brogue, and her love that can't be tired, and can't give him up, and that bears, and believes, and hopes, and endures, seems to me a revelation of the Christ-like spirit a thousand times more than if she was tramping to a woman's rights convention and exposing her wrongs and calling down justice on his head."

"But," said I, "look at the children! Oughtn't she to part with him on their account?"

"Yes, look at the children," said he. "The little things have learned already, from their mother, to care for each other, and to care for their father. In their little childish way, they love and bear with him just as she does. The boy came to me this afternoon and said, 'Father's got another crazy spell.' Already he has a delicacy in his very mode of speaking; and he doesn't say his father is *drunk*, but that he is *crazy*, as he is. And then he and the little girl are so fatherly and motherly with the baby. Now, I say, all this growth of virtue around sin and sorrow is something to be revered. The fact is"—he added—

"The day for separating the tares from the wheat hasn't come yet. And it seems to me that the moral discipline of bearing with evil, patiently, is a great deal better and more ennobling than the most vigorous assertion of one's personal rights. I can see a great deal of suffering in that family from poor Pat's weakness and wickedness, but I also see most noble virtues growing up, even in these children, from the straits to which they are put. And as to poor Pat himself, he comes out of his demon-baptism penitent and humble, and more anxious to please than ever. It is really affecting to see with what zeal he serves me, when I have brought him through a 'drunk.' And yet I know that it will have to be gone over, and over, and over again. Sometimes it seems to me he is like the earth after a thunder-shower—fresher and clearer than he was before. And I am quite of Mrs. Molloy's mind—there is too much good in Pat to have him swept off into the gutter for the bad; and so, as God gives her grace to suffer, let her suffer. And if I can bear one little end of her cross, I will. If she does not save him in this life, she'll save him from sinking lower in demonism. She may only keep his head above water till he gets past the gates of death, and then, perhaps, in the next life, he will appear to be saved by just that much which she has done in keeping him up."

Bolton spoke with an intense earnestness, and a sad and solemn tone, as if he were shaken and almost convulsed by some deep, internal feeling. For some moments there was a silence between us,—the silence of a great unuttered emotion. At last, he drew a long breath, and said, "Well, Hal, what was it you wanted to talk about?"

"Oh," said I, "I have a letter from a friend of mine that I wanted to show you, to see whether you could do anything"—and I gave him Caroline's letter.

He sat down under the gas-light to read it. The sight of the hand-writing seemed to affect him at once. His large, dark eyes flashed over the letter, and he turned it quickly, and looked at the signature; a most unutterable expression passed over his face, like that of a man who is in danger of giving way to some violent emotion; and then, apparently by a great effort of self-constraint, he set himself carefully to reading the letter. He read it over two or three times, folded it up, and handed it back to me without any remark, and then sat leaning forward on the table with his face shaded with his hand.

"My cousin is a most uncommon character," I said; "and, as you will observe by this letter, has a good deal of ability as a writer."

"I am acquainted with her," he said, briefly, making a sudden movement with his hand.

"Indeed? Where did you know her?"

"Years ago," he said, briefly. "I taught the academy in her village, and she was one of my scholars. I know the character of her mind."

There was a dry brevity in all this, of a man who is afraid that he shall express more than he means to.

Said I, "I showed this letter to you because I thought you had more influence in the press than I have; and if you are acquainted with her, so much the better, as you can judge whether she can gain any employment here which would make it worth her while to come and try. I have always had an impression that she had very fine mental powers."

"There is no doubt about that," he said, hurriedly. "She is an exceptional woman."

He rose up, and took the letter from me. "If you will allow me to retain this a while," he said, "I will see what *I* can do; but just now I have some writing to finish. I will speak to you about it to-morrow."

That evening, I introduced the subject to my friend, Ida Van Arsdel, and gave her a sketch of Caroline's life-history. She entered into it with the warmest interest, and was enthusiastic in her desire that the plan might succeed.

"I hope that she will come to New York," she said, "so that we can make her acquaintance. Don't, pray, fail to let me know, Mr. Henderson, if she should be here, that I may call on her."

CHAPTER XXVII.

EASTER LILIES.

THE next afternoon Jim and I kept our appointment with the Van Arsdels. We found one of the parlors transformed to a perfect bower of floral decorations. Stars and wreaths and crosses and crowns were either just finished or in process of rapid construction under fairy fingers. When I came in, Eva and Alice were busy on a gigantic cross, to be made entirely of lilies of the valley. of which some bushels were lying around on the carpet. Ida had joined the service, and was kneeling on the floor tying up the flowers in bunches to offer them to Eva.

"You see, Mr. Henderson, the difference between modern religion and the primitive Christians," she said. "Their cross was rough wood and hard nails; ours is lilies and roses made up in fashionable drawing-rooms."

"I'm afraid," said Eva, "our *crown* may prove much of the same material!"

"I sometimes wonder," said Ida, "whether all the money spent for flowers at Easter could not better be spent in some mode of relieving the poor."

"Well," said Eva, "I am sorry to bring up such a parallel, but isn't that just the same kind of remark that Judas made about the alabaster vase of ointment?"

"Yes," said I; "what could be more apparently useless than a mere perfume, losing itself in the air, and vanishing entirely? And yet the Saviour justified that lavish expenditure when it was the expression of a heart-feeling."

"But," said Ida, "don't you think it very difficult to mark the line where these services and offerings to religious worship become excessive?"

"Of course it is," said I; "but no more difficult on this subject than any other."

"That's the great trouble in this life," said Eva. "The line between right and wrong seems always so indefinite, like the line between any two colors of the prism—it is hard to say just where one ends and another begins."

"It is the office of common sense," I said, "to get the exact right in all such matters—there is a sort of *instinct* in it."

"Well, all I have to say about it is," said Eva, "since we do spend lavishly and without stint in our houses and in our dress for adornment, we ought to do at least as much for our religion. I like to see the adornment of a church generous, overflowing, as if we gave our very best. As to these lilies, I ordered them of an honest gardener, and it goes to help support a family that would be poor if it were not for these flowers. It is better to support one or two families honestly, by buying their flowers for churches, than it is to give the money away. So I look on it."

"Oh, well," said Alice, "there is no end to anything. Everything you do tends to something else; and everything leads to something; and there is never any knowing about anything; and so I think it is best just to have as good a time as you can, and do everything that is agreeable, and make everything just as pretty as it can be. And I think it is fun to trim up the church for Easter. There now! And it don't do any harm. And I just like to go to the sunrise service, if it does make one sleepy all day. What do you say, Mr. Fellows? Do you think you could go through with the whole of it?"

"Miss Alice, if you only go you will find me inspired with the spirit of a primitive Christian in this respect," said Jim. "I shall follow wherever you lead the way, if it's ever so late at night, or ever so early in the morning."

"And, Mr. Henderson," said she, "may we depend on you, too?"

"By all means," said I, as I sat industriously gathering up the lilies into bunches and tying them.

"Mr. Henderson is in a hopeful way," said Eva. "I think we may have him in the true church some of these times."

"I am afraid," said Ida, "that Mr. Henderson, having seen you only in Lent, won't be able to keep track of you when the Easter rejoicings begin, and the parties recommence."

"Oh dear me!" said Eva, with a sort of shudder. "To think of that horrid wedding!"

"That's just like Eva," said Alice. "She's been, and been, and been to these things till she's tired out with them; whereas, I am just come out, and I like them, and want more of them. I don't think they are horrid at all. I am perfectly delighted about that Elmore wedding. One will see there all the new things, and all the stunning things, and all the latest devices from Paris. I was in at Tullegig's the other day, and you never saw such a sight as her rooms are! Somebody said it looked as if rainbows had been broken to pieces and thrown all round. She showed me all the different costumes that she was making up for the various parties. You know there are to be seven bride's-maids, and each of them is to wear a different color. Madame thinks '*C'est si gentil.*' Then, you know, they are making such grand preparations up at that *chateau* of theirs. The whole garden is to be roofed in and made a ball room of. I think it will be gorgeous. I say, Mr. Fellows, if you and Mr. Henderson would like it, I know I could manage cards for you."

Jim assented, heartily, for both of us; and I added that I should like to see the affair; for I had never seen enough of that sort of thing to take away the novelty.

After tea we all sallied out to the church with our trophies. We went in two carriages, for the better accommodation of these, and had a busy time disembarking at the church and carrying them in. Here we met a large committee of co-workers, and the scene of real business commenced. Jim and I worked heroically under the direction of our fair superintendents. By midnight the church was a bower of fragrance and beauty. The chancel seemed a perfect bed of lilies, out of which rose the great white cross, shedding perfume upon the air. The baptismal font was covered with a closely woven mosaic of fragrant violets, and in each panel appeared an alternate red or white cross formed of flowers. The font was filled with a tall bouquet of white saint's-lilies, such as gardeners force for Easter.

Eva and I worked side by side this evening, and never had I seemed to know her more intimately. The fact is, among other dangerous situations to a young man's heart, none may be mentioned more seductive than to be in a church twining flowers and sorting crosses and emblems in the still holy hours of the night. One's head gets, somehow, bewildered; all worldly boundaries of cold prudence fade away; and one seems to be lifted up to some other kind of land where those that are congenial never part from each other. So I felt when, our work being all done, I retired with Eva to the shadow of a distant pew to survey the whole result. We had turned on the gas-light to show our work, and its beams, falling on thousands of these white lily-bells and on all the sacred emblems, shed a sort of chastened light. Again, somehow, as if it had been a rose-leaf floating down from heaven, I found that little hand in mine; and we spoke low to each other, in whispers, of how good and how pleasant it was to be there, and to unite in such service and work—words that meant far more than they seemed to say. Once, in the course of the evening, I saw her little glove where it had fallen into a nest of cast-off flowers, and, as no one was looking, I seized upon it as a relic, and appropriated it to my own sacred memories. Nor would I surrender it, though afterward I heard her making pathetic inquiries for it. Late at night I went home to think and dream, and woke with the first dim gray of morning, thinking of my appointment to meet her at the church.

It is a charming thing to go out in the fresh calm morning before any one is stirring. The bells for early service were dropping their notes here and there, down through the air, as if angels were calling men to awake and remember that great event which happened so silently and so unregarded, many, many years ago. I thought as I walked through the dim streets and saw here and there an early worshiper, prayer-book in hand, stealing along, of the lonely women who, years ago, in Jerusalem, sought the sepulchre to see where they had laid Him.

Little twittering sparrows filled the ivy on the outside of the church and made it vibrate with their chirpings. There was the promise in the brightening skies of a glorious sunrise. I stood waiting awhile, quite alone, till one by one the bands of youths and maidens came from different directions.

I had called Jim as I went out, but he, preferring to take the utmost latitude for sleep, looked at his watch and told me he would take another half hour before he joined us.

Eva was there, however, among the very first. The girls, she said, were coming. We went into the dim church together and sat ourselves down in the shady solitude of one of the slips waiting for the morning light to pour through the painted windows. We said nothing to each other; but the silence was sociable and not blank. There are times in life when silence between two friends is better than speech; for they know each other by intuition.

Gradually the church filled with worshipers; and as the rising sun streamed through the painted windows and touched all the lilies with brightness, a choir of children in the organ-loft broke forth into carols like so many invisible birds. And then, the old chant,

> "Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more,"

seemed to thrill every heart.

After the service came a general shaking of hands and greetings from neighbors and friends, as everybody walked round examining the decorations.

"Now, Mr. Henderson," said Eva, as she stood with me surveying this scene, "is not a church which preserves all these historical memorials a most lovely one? Ought we not thus to cherish the memory of that greatest event that ever happened in this world? And how beautiful it is to bring up children year after year by festivals like these, to mark off their life in acts of remembrance."

"You speak truly," I said, sharing her enthusiasm. "I could wish the church of all good people had never ceased to keep Easter; indeed, they who do disregard it seem to me a cold minority out of the great fellowship. I think it is fortunate that the Romish and the Episcopal churches are bringing us, descendants of the Puritans, back to those primitive customs. I, for one, come back willingly and joyfully."

[Eva Van Arsdel to Isabel Convers.]

My Darling Belle:—I have been a naughty girl to let your letter lie so long. But my darling, it is not true, as you there suggest, that the bonds of sisterly affection, which bound us in school, are growing weaker, and that I no longer trust you as a confidential friend. Believe me, the day will never come, dearest Belle, when I shall cease to unfold to you every innermost feeling.

And now to come to the point about "that Mr. Henderson." Indeed, my love, your cautions are greatly mistaken. It is true that, much to my surprise, he has taken a fancy to visit quite intimately at our house, and has made himself a general favorite in the family. Mamma, and Aunt Maria, and all the girls like him so much. But, then, you must know he is generally set down as Ida's admirer. At all events Ida and he are extremely good friends; and when he calls here he generally spends the largest part of the evening in her sanctum; and they have most edifying conversations on all the approved modern topics—the Darwinian theory, woman's rights, and everything else you can think of. One thing I admit is a little peculiar—he notices everything that *I* say in conversation—I must own. I never saw such an observing creature. For example, the first evening he was at our house, I just accidentally dropped before him the remark that I was going to early morning services in Lent, and would you believe it?—the next morning he was there too, and walked home with me. I was the more astonished, because he does not belong to the Church—so one would not expect it, you know. He is a member of the Bethany Church himself, but he seems delighted with our services, and talks about them beautifully—as well as our rector could. I really wish you could have heard him! He seems to have such an earnest, thoughtful mind; and what I like in him is, that he never flatters, and talks that matter-of-course complimentary nonsense, that some men think is the thing to be talked to ladies; neither has he that way of *talking down* to one that superior men sometimes have, when they are talking with us girls. I read somewhere this sentiment—that we may know the opinion people have of us by the kind of conversation they address to us—and if this is so I ought to be flattered by the way Mr. Henderson talks to me; for I think he shows quite as much anxiety to find out my opinion on all subjects as he does Ida's. You will, perhaps, think it rather peculiar if I tell you that ever since that first morning he has been as constant at the morning services as I have, and always walks home with me. In this way we really are getting quite intimately acquainted. Now, Belle, don't put on that knowing look of yours, and intimate that there is anything *particular* in all this, for there is *not*. I do assure you there is not a bit of nonsense in it. You would be perfectly astonished to hear how gravely and philosophically we talk. We moralize and philosophize, and as Jim Fellows would say, "come the high moral dodge" in a way that would astonish you.

And yet, Belle, they wrong us who are called fashionable girls, when they take for granted that we are not capable of thinking seriously, and that we prefer those whose conversation consists only of flattery and nonsense. It is mainly because I feel that Mr. Henderson has deep, serious purposes in life, and because he appreciates and addresses himself to the deepest part of my nature, that his friendship is so valuable to me. I say *friendship* advisedly, dear Belle, because I insist upon it that there *can* be friendship, pure and simple, between a gentleman and a lady; in our case there is "only this and nothing more."

How very teasing and provoking it is that there cannot be this friendship without observation and comment! Now I am very careful to avoid any outward appearance of special intimacy that might make talk, and he appears to be very careful also. After the first day at morning service he did not join me immediately on going out of church, but went out at another door and joined me at the next corner. I was so thankful for it, for old Mrs. Eyelett was there with her sharp eyes, and I know by experience that though she is a pillar of the church she finds abundance of leisure from her devotions to watch all the lambs of the flock; and I am one that everybody seems to keep specially in mind as proper to be looked after. If I only speak to, or look at, or walk with the same person more than once, the airy tongues of rumor are busy engaging and marrying me. Isn't it horrid? I would not have old Mrs. Eyelett get anything of this sort into her head for the world; it's so disagreeable to have such a thing get to a gentleman's hearing when he knows there is no truth in it; and the world has condescended to interest itself so much in my fortunes that it seems dangerous for anybody to be more than civil without being set down as an aspirant.

The only comfort there is in being persistently reported engaged to Mr. Sydney is that it serves to keep off other reports, and I sometimes think of the old fable of the fox who would not have the present swarm of flies driven off lest there should come a new one in its place. How I wish people would let one's private affairs alone! Here I must break off, for there is company down stairs.

Wednesday Eve.

I have let this thing lie some days, dear Belle, because there has been so much going and coming, time has flitted away. Mr. H. has been at our house a good deal. I have made a discovery about him. He has a beautiful cousin that he thinks everything of—"Cousin Caroline"—and she is a very superior woman. So you see how silly all your suggestions are, Belle. For aught I know he may be engaged to this cousin Caroline. I believe she is coming to New York, and I am just wild to see her. You know I want to see if I shall like her. She must be just the thing for him; and I *hope* I shall like her. Ida thinks she shall. Aunt Maria, who wants to portion off the fate of mortals, has made up her mind that Mr. H. *must* be an admirer of Ida's; and in short, that they are to be for each other.

Ida looks down on all this sort of thing with her placid superiority. She has a perfect contempt for it, so *very* perfect that it is quiet. She does not even trouble herself to express it. Ida *likes* Mr. H. very much, and has a straightforward, open, honest friendship with him, and doesn't trouble her head a bit what people may say.

Saturday Morning.

We are all busy now about Easter decorations. We have ordered no end of flowers, and are going into adornments on a great scale. We press all hands in that we can get. Mr. Henderson and Jim Fellows are coming to-night to tea to help us carry our things to church and get them up.

Monday Morning.

I am so tired. We were up nearly all night Saturday, and then at the sunrise service Easter morning, and services all day. Beautiful! Lovely as they could be! But if one has a good time in this world, one must pay for it—and I am all tired out.

Mr. Henderson was with us through the whole affair. One thing seemed to me quite strange. I dropped my glove among some flowers, while I was busy putting up a wreath of lilies, and I saw him through a bower of hemlock trees walk up to the spot, and slyly confiscate the article. In a moment I came back, and said, "I dropped my glove here. Where can it be?" The wretched creature helped me search for it, with every appearance of interest, but never offered to restore the stolen goods. It was all so quiet—so private! You know, gentlemen often pretend, as a matter of gallantry, that they want your glove, or a ribbon, or some such memento; but this was all so secret. He evidently thinks I don't know it; and, Belle—what should *you* think about it? EVA.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ENCHANTMENT AND DISENCHANTMENT.

DURING a month after Easter, I was, so to speak, in a state of mental somnambulism, seeing the visible things of this mortal life through an enchanted medium, in which old, prosaic, bustling New York, with its dry drudgeries and uninteresting details, became suddenly vivified and glorified; just as when some rosy sunset floods with light the matter-of-fact architecture of Printing-House Square, and etherealizes every line, and guides every detail, and heightens every bit of color, till it all seems picturesque and beautiful.

I did not know what was the matter with me, but I felt somehow as if I had taken the elixir of life and was breathing the air of an immortal youth. Whenever I sat down to write I found my inspiration. I no longer felt myself alone in my thoughts and speculations; I wrote *to* another mind, a mind that I felt would recognize mine; and then I carried what I had written, and read it to Ida Van Arsdel for her criticisms. Ida was a capital critic, and had graciously expressed her willingness and desire to aid me in this way, to any extent. But was it Ida who was my inspiration?

Sitting by, bent over her embroidery, or coming in accidentally and sitting down to listen, was Eva; full of thought, full of inquiry; sometimes gay and airy, sometimes captious and controversial—always suggestive and inspiring. From these readings grew talks protracted and confidential, on all manner of subjects; and each talk was the happy parent of more talks, till it seemed that there was growing up an endless series of occasions for our having long and exciting interviews; for, what was said yesterday, in the reflections and fancies of the night following, immediately blossomed out into queries and consequences and inferences on both sides, which it was immediately and pressingly necessary that we should meet to compare and adjust. Now, when two people are in this state of mind, it is surprising what a number of providential incidents are always bringing them together. It was perfectly astonishing to us both to find how many purely accidental interviews we had. If I went out for a walk, I was sure, first or last, to meet her. To be sure I took to walking very much in streets and squares where I had observed she might be expected to appear—but that did not make the matter seem to me the less unpremeditated.

I had been in the habit of taking a daily constitutional stroll in Central Park, and the Van Arsdels were in the habit of driving there, at orthodox fashionable hours. In time, it seemed to happen that this afternoon stroll of mine always brought forth the happy fruit of a pleasant interview.

There was no labyrinth or bower or summer-house, no dingle or bosky dell, so retired that I did not find it occasionally haunted by the presence of this dryad.

True she was not there alone; sometimes with Ida, sometimes with Alice, or with a lively bevy of friends—but it made no difference with whom, so long as she was there.

The many sins of omission and commission of which the City Fathers of New York are accused, are, I think, wonderfully redeemed and covered by the beauties of the provision for humanity which they have made in Central Park. Having seen every park in the world, I am not ashamed to glorify our own, as providing as much beauty and cheap pleasure as can anywhere be found under the sun.

Especially ought all lovers *par excellence* to crown the projectors and executors of this Park with unfading wreaths of olive and myrtle. It is so evidently adapted to all the purposes of falling in love and keeping in love that the only wonder is that any one can remain a bachelor in presence of such advantages and privileges! There is all the peacefulness, all the seclusion, all the innocent wildness of a country Arcadia, given for the price of a five cents' ride in the cars to any citizen who chooses to be made moral and innocent.

The Central Park is an immortal poem, forever addressing itself to the eye and ear in the whirl and bubble of that hot and bewildered city. It is a Wordsworth immortalized and made permanent, preaching to the citizens.

"One impulse from a vernal mood
May teach you more of man—
Of moral evil, and of good—
Than all the sages can."

Certainly during this one season of my life I did full justice to the beauties of Central Park. There was not a nook or corner where wild flowers unfolded, where white-stemmed birches leaned over still waters, or ivies clambered over grottoed rocks, which I did not explore; and when in the winding walks of "the Ramble" I caught distant sight of a white drapery, or heard through budding thickets the silvery sounds of laughing and talking, I knew I was coming on one of those pleasant surprises for which the Park grounds are so nicely arranged.

Sometimes Eva would come with a carriage full of children, and with the gay little fairies would pass a sunny afternoon, swinging them, watching them riding in the little goat-carriages, or otherwise presiding over their gaieties. We had, under these circumstances, all the advantage of a tête-à tête without any of the responsibility of seeking or prolonging it. In fact, the presence of others was a salvo to my conscience, and to public appearance, for, looking on Eva as engaged to another, I was very careful not to go over a certain line of appearances in my relations to her. My reason told me that I was upon dangerous ground for my own peace, but I quieted reason as young men in my circumstances generally do, by the best of arguments.

I said to myself that, "No matter if she were engaged, why shouldn't I worship at her shrine, and cherish her image as Dante did that of Beatrice, and Tasso that of Eleanora d'Este?" and so on.

"To be sure," I reflected, "this thing can never come to anything; of course she never can be anything to you more than a star in the heavens. But," I said in reply, "she is mine to worship and adore with the worship that we give to all beautiful things. She is mine as are fair flowers, and the blue skies, and the bright sunshine, which cheer and inspire."

I was conscious that I had in my own most sacred receptacle at home, a little fairy glove that she had dropped, to which I had no claim; but I said to myself, "When a leaf falls from the rose, who shall say that I shall not gather it up?" So, too, I had one of those wonderful, useless little bits of fairy gossamer, which Eve's daughters call a *pocket-handkerchief.* I had yet so little sense of sin that I stole that too, kept the precious theft folded in my prayer-book, and thought *she* would never know it. I began to understand the efficacy that is ascribed to holy relics, for it seemed to me that if ever any deadly trouble or trial should come upon me, I would lay these little things upon my heart, and they would comfort me.

And yet, all this while, I solemnly told myself I was *not in love,*—oh, no, not in the least. This was *friendship*—the very condensed, distilled essence of friendship, that and nothing more. To be sure it was friendship set to a heroic key—friendship of a rare quality. I longed to do something for her, and often thought how glad I would be to give my life for her. Having a very active imagination, sometimes as I lay awake at night I perpetrated all sorts of confusions in the city of New York, for the sole purpose of giving myself an opportunity to do something for her. I set fire to the Van Arsdel mansion several times, in different ways, and, rushing in, bore her through the flames. I inaugurated a horrible plot against the life of her father, and rushing in at the critical moment, delivered the old gentleman that I might revel in her delight. I became suddenly a millionaire by the death of a supposititious uncle in the East Indies, and immediately proceeded to lay all my treasures at her feet.

As for Mr. Wat Sydney, it is incredible the resignation with which I saw him ship-wrecked, upset in stages, crushed in railroad accidents, while I appeared on the scene as the consoling friend; not that I had, of course, any purpose of causing such catastrophes, but there was a degree of resignation attending the view of them that was soothing.

I had in my heart a perfect certainty that Sydney was unworthy of her, but of course racks and thumbscrews should not draw from me the slightest intimation of the kind, in her presence.

So matters went on for some weeks. But sometimes it happens when a young fellow has long wandered in a beautiful dream of this kind, a sudden and harsh light of reality and of common-sense, every-day life, is thrown upon him in an unforeseen moment; and this moment at last arrived for me.

One evening, when I dropped in for a call at the Van Arsdel mansion, the young ladies were all out at a concert, but Mrs. Van Arsdel was at home, and for some reason, unusually bland and motherly.

"My dear Mr. Henderson," she said, "it is rather hard on you to be obliged to accept an old woman like me, as a substitute for youth and beauty; but really, I am not sorry, on the whole, that the girls are out, for I would like a little chance of having a free, confidential talk with you. Your relations with us have been so intimate and kindly, I feel, you know, quite as if you were one of us."

I replied, of course, that 'I was extremely flattered and gratified by her kindness," and assured her with effusion, and if I mistake not, with tears in my eyes, that 'she had made me forget that I was a stranger in New York, and that I should always cherish the most undying recollection of the kindness that I had received in her family, and of the pleasant hours I had spent there.'

"Ah, yes, indeed!" she said, "Mr. Henderson, it is pleasant to me to think that you feel so. I like to give young men a *home* feeling. But after all," she continued, "one feels a little pensive once in a while, in thinking that one cannot always keep the home-circle unbroken. Indeed, I never could see how some mothers could seem to rejoice as they do in the engagement of their daughters. There is Mrs. Elmore, now, her feelings are perfectly inexplicable to me."

I assured her that I was quite of her way of thinking, and agreed with her perfectly.

"Now," she said, "as the time comes on, when I begin to think of parting with Eva, though to the very best man in the world, do you know, Mr. Henderson, it really makes me feel sad?"

I began at this moment to find the drift of the conversation becoming very embarrassing and disagreeable to me, but I mustered my energies to keep up my share in it with a becoming degree of interest.

"I am to understand, then," said I, forcing a smile. "that Miss Eva's engagement with Mr. Sydney is a settled fact?"

"Well, virtually so," she replied. "Eva is averse to the publicity of public announcements; but—you know how it is, Mr. Henderson, there are relations which amount to the same thing as an engagement." Here Mrs. Van Arsdel leaned back on the sofa and drew a letter from her pocket. while the words of my part of the conversation did not seem to be forthcoming. I sat in embarrassed silence.

"The fact is, Mr. Henderson," she said, settling the diamonds and emeralds on her white, shapely fingers, "I have received a letter to-day from Mr. Sydney,—he is a noble fellow," she added, with empressement.

I secretly wished the noble fellow at Kamtschatka, but I said, in sympathetic tones, "Ah, indeed?" as if waiting for the farther communication, which I perceived she was determined to bestow on me.

"Yes," she said, "he is coming to New York in a short time, and then, I suppose, there is no doubt that all will be finally arranged. I confess to you I have the weakness to feel a little depressed about it. Did you ever read Jean Ingelow's *Songs of Seven*, Mr. Henderson? I think she touches so beautifully on the trials of mothers in giving up their daughters?"

I said, "I only trust that Mr. Sydney is in some degree worthy of Miss Van Arsdel; though," I added with warmth, "no man can be wholly so."

"Eva is a good girl," said Mrs. Van Arsdel, "and I must confess that the parting from her will be the greatest trial of my life. But I thought I would let you know how matters stood, because of the very great confidence which we feel in you."

I found presence of mind to acknowledge politely my sense of the honor conferred. Mrs. Van Arsdel continued playing prettily with her rings.

"One thing more perhaps I ought to say, Mr. Henderson, while your intimacy in our family is and has been quite what I desire, yet you know people are so absurd, and will say such absurd things, that it might not be out of the way to suggest a little caution; you know one wouldn't want to give rise to any reports that might be unpleasant—anything, you know, that might reach Mr. Sydney's ear—you understand me."

"My dear Mrs. Van Arsdel, is it possible that anything has been said?"

"Now, now, don't agitate yourself, Mr. Henderson; I know what you are going to say—no, nothing of the kind. But you know that we elderly people, who know the world and just what stupid and unreasonable things people are always saying, sometimes have to give you young folks just the slightest little caution. Your conduct in this family has been all that is honorable, and gentlemanly, and unexceptionable, Mr. Henderson, and such as would lead us to repose the most perfect confidence in you. In fact, I beg you to consider this communication with regard to Eva's connection with Mr. Sydney, as quite in confidence."

"I certainly shall do so," said I, rising to take my leave, with much the same sort of eagerness with which one rises from a dentist's chair, after having his nerves picked at. As at this moment the voices of the returning party broke up our interview, I immediately arose, and excusing myself with the plea of an article to finish, left the house and walked home in a state of mind as disagreeable as my worst enemy could have wished. Like all delicate advisers who are extremely fearful of hurting your feelings, Mrs. Van Arsdel had told me nothing definite, and yet had said enough to make me supremely uncomfortable. What did she mean, and how much did she mean? Had there been reports? Was this to be received as an intimation from Eva herself? Had she discovered the state of my feelings, and was she, through her mother, warning me of my danger?

All my little romance seemed disenchanted. These illusions of love are like the legends of hidden treasures guarded by watchful spirits which disappear from you if you speak a word; or like an enchanting dream, which vanishes if you start and open your eyes. I tossed to and fro restlessly all night, and resolved to do precisely the most irrational thing that I could have done, under the circumstances, and that was to give up going to the Van Arsdel house, and to see Eva no more.

The next morning, however, showed me that I could not make so striking a change in my habits without subjecting myself to Jim Fellows' remarks and inquiry. I resolved on a course of gradual emancipation and detachment.

[Eva Van Arsdel to Isabel Convers.]

My Dearest Belle:—Since I wrote to you last there have been the strangest changes. I scarcely know what to think. You remember I told you all about Easter Eve, and a certain person's appearance, and about the stolen glove and all that. Your theory of accounting for all this was precisely mine; in fact I could think of no other. And, Belle, if I could only see you I could tell you of a thousand little things that make me certain that he cares for me more than in the way of mere friendship. I thought I could not be mistaken in that. There has been scarcely a day since our acquaintance began when I have not in some way seen him or heard from him; you know all those early services, when he was as constant as the morning, and always walked home with me; then, he and Jim Fellows always spend at least one evening in a week at our house, and there are no end of accidental meetings. For example, when we take our afternoon drives at Central Park we are sure to see them sitting on the benches watching us go by, and it came to be quite a regular thing when we stopped the carriage at the terrace and got out to walk to find them there, and then Alice would go off with Jim Fellows, and Mr. H. and I would stroll up and down among the lilac hedges and in all those lovely little nooks and dells that are so charming. I'm quite sure I never explored the treasures of the Park as I have this Spring. We have rambled everywhere—up hill and down dale—it certainly is the loveliest and most complete imitation of wild nature that ever art perfected. One could fancy one's self deep in the country in some parts of it; far from all the rush and whirl and frivolity of this great, hot, dizzy New York. You may imagine that with all this we have had opportunity to become very intimate. He has told me all about himself, all the history of his life, all about his mother, and his home; it seems hardly possible that one friend could speak more unreservedly to another, and I, dear Belle, have found myself speaking with equal frankness to him. We know each other so perfectly that there has for a long time seemed to be only a thin impalpable cobweb barrier between us; but you know, Belle, that airy filmy barrier is something that one would not by a look or a word disturb. For weeks I have felt every day that surely the next time we meet all this must come to a crisis. That he would say in words what he says in looks—in involuntary actions—what in fact I am perfectly sure of. Till he speaks I must be guarded. I must hold myself back from showing him the kindly interest I really feel. For I am proud, as you know, Belle, and have always held the liberty of my heart as a sacred treasure. I have always felt a secret triumph in the consciousness that I did not care for anybody, and that my happiness was wholly in my own hands, and I mean to keep it so. Our friendship is a pleasant thing enough, but I am not going to let it become too necessary, you understand. It isn't that I care so very much, but my *curiosity* is really excited to know just what the real state of the case is; one wants to investigate interesting phenomena, you know. When I saw that little glove movement on Easter Eve I confess I thought the game all in my own hands, and that I could quietly wait to say "checkmate" in due form and due time; but after all nothing came of it; that is, nothing decisive; and I confess I didn't know what to think. Sometimes I have fancied some obstacle or entanglement or commitment with some other woman—this Cousin Caroline perhaps—but he talks about her to me in the most open and composed manner. Sometimes I fancy he has heard the report of my engagement to Sydney. If he has, why doesn't he ask me about it? I have no objection to telling him, but I certainly shall not open the subject myself. Perhaps, as Ida thinks, he is proud and poor, and not willing to be a suitor to a rich young good-for-nothing. Well, that can't be helped, he *must* be a suitor if he wins me, for *I* shan't be; *he* must ask *me*, for I certainly shan't ask him, that's settled. If he would "ask me pretty," now, who knows what nice things he might hear? I would tell him, *perhaps*, how much more one true noble heart is worth in my eyes than all that Wat Sydney has to give. Sometimes I am quite provoked with him that he should look so much, and yet say no more, and I feel a naughty wicked inclination to flirt with somebody else just to make him open those "*grands yeux*" of his a little wider and to a little better purpose. Sometimes I begin to feel a trifle vindictive and as if I should like to give him a touch of the claw. The claw, my dear, the little pearly claw that we women keep in reserve in the "*patte de velours,*" our only and most sacred weapon of defense.

The other night, at Mrs. Cerulean's *salon,* she was holding forth with great effect on woman's right to court men —as natural and indefeasible—and I told her that I considered our right to *be* courted far more precious and inviolable. Of course it is so. The party that makes the proposals is the party that must take the risk of refusal, and who would wish to do that? It puts me out of all patience just to think of it. If there is anything that vexes me it is that a man should ever feel sure that a woman's heart is at his disposal before he has asked for it prettily and properly in all due form, and, my dear, I have the fear of this before my eyes, even in our most intimate moments. He shall not feel too sure of me.

Wednesday Evening.

My dear Belle, I can't think what in the world is up now; but something or other has happened to a certain person that has changed all our relations. For more than a week I have scarcely seen him. He called with Jim Fellows on the usual evening, but did not go into Ida's room, and hardly came near me, and seemed all in a flutter to leave all the time. He was at the great Elmore wedding, and so was I, but we scarcely spoke all the evening. I could see him following all my motions and watching me at a distance, but as sure as I came into a room he seemed in a perfect flutter to get out of it, and yet no sooner had he done so than he secured some position where he could observe me at a distance. I was provoked enough, and I thought if my lord wanted to observe, I'd give him something to see, so I flirted with Jerrold Livingstone, whom I don't care a copper about, within an inch of his life, and I made a special effort to be vastly agreeable to all the danglers and moustaches that I usually take delight in snubbing, and I could see that he looked quite wretched, which was a comfort—but yet he wouldn't come near me till just as I was going to leave, when he came to beg I would stay longer and declared that he hadn't seen anything of me. It was a little too much! I assumed an innocent air and surveyed him "*de haut en bas*" and said, "Why, dear me, Mr. Henderson, possible that *you've* been here all this time? Where have you kept yourself?" and then I handed my bouquet to Livingstone and swept by in triumph; his last look after me as I went down stairs was tragical, you may believe. Well, I can't make him out, but I don't care. I *won't* care. He was free to come. He shall be free to go; but isn't it vexatious that in cases of this kind one cannot put an end to the tragedy by a simple common-sense question?

One doesn't care so very much, you know, *what* is the matter with these creatures, only one is *curious* to know what upon earth makes them *act* so. A man sets up a friendship with you, and then looks and acts as if he adored you, as if he worshiped the ground you tread on, and then is off at a tangent with a tragedy air, and you are not allowed to say "My dear sir, why do you behave so? why do you make such a precious goose of yourself?"

The fact is, these friendships of women with men are all *fol-de-rol*. The creatures always have an advantage over you. They can make every advance and come nearer and nearer and really make themselves quite agreeable, not to say necessary, and then suddenly change the whole footing and one cannot even ask why. One cannot say, as to another woman, "What is the matter? what has altered your manner?" She cannot even show that she notices the change, without loss of self-respect. A woman in friendship with a man is made heartless by this very necessity, she must always hold herself ready to change hands and make her chassé to right or left with all suitable indifference whenever her partner is ready for another move in the cotillion.

Well, so be it. I fancy I can do this as well as another. *I* never shall inquire into his motives. I'm sorry for him, too, for he looked quite haggard and unhappy. Well; it's his own fault; for if he would only be open with me he'd find it to his advantage—*perhaps.*

You are quite mistaken, dear, in what you have heard about his belonging to that radical party of strange creatures who rant and rage about progress in our times. Like all generous, magnanimous men, who are conscious of strength, he sympathizes with the weak, and is a champion of woman wherever she is wronged; and certainly in many respects, we must all admit women are wronged by the laws and customs of society. But no man could be nicer in his sense of feminine delicacy and more averse to associating with bold and unfeminine women than he. I must defend him there. I am sure that nothing could be more distasteful to him than the language and conduct of many of these dreadful female reformers of our day. If I *am* out of sorts with him I must at least do him this justice.

You inquire about Alice and Jim Fellows; my dear, there can be nothing there. They are perfectly well matched; a pair of flirts, and neither trusts the other an inch farther than they can see. Alice has one of those characters that lie in layers like the geologic strata that our old professor used to show us. The top layer is all show, and display and ambition; dig down below that and you find a warm volcanic soil where noble plants might cast root. But at present she is all in the upper stratum. She must have her run of flirting and fashion and adventure, and just now a splendid marriage is her ideal, but she is capable of a great deal in the depths of her nature. All I hope is she will not marry till she has got down into it, but she is starting under full sail now, coquetting to right and left, making great slaughter.

She looked magnificently at the wedding and quite out-shone me. She has that superb Spanish style of beauty which promises to wear well and bloom out into more splendor as time goes on, and she has a good heart with all her nonsense.

Well, dear, what a long letter! and must I add to it the account of the wedding glories—lists of silver and gold tea sets, and sets of pearls and diamonds? My dear, only fancy Tiffany's counters transferred bodily, with cards from A., B., and C, presenting this and that; fancy also the young men of your acquaintance silly-drunk, or stupid-drunk in the latter part of the night in the supper-room; fancy, if you can, the bridegroom carried up stairs, because he couldn't go up on his own feet!—this is a wedding! Never mind! the bride had three or four sets of diamond shoe-buckles, and rubies and emeralds in the profusion of the Arabian Nights. Well, it will be long before I care for such a wedding! I am sick of splendors, sated with nick-nacks, my doll is stuffed with saw-dust, &c., &c., but I shall ever be your loving EVA.

P. S.—My Dear—A case of conscience!—Would it be a sin to flirt a little with Sydney, just enough to aggravate somebody else? Sydney's, you mind, is not a deep heart-case. He only wants me because I am hard to catch, and have been the fashion. I'll warrant him against breaking his heart for anybody. However, I don't believe I will flirt after all—I'll try some other square of the chess-board.

The confidential conversation held with me by Mrs. Van Arsdel had all the effect on my mental castle-building that a sudden blow had on Alnaschar's basket of glass ware in the Arabian tales.

Nobody is conscious how far he has been in dreamland till he is awakened. I was now fully aroused to the fact that I was in love with Eva Van Arsdel, to all intents and purposes, so much in love as made the nourishing and cherishing of an intimate friendship an impossibility, and only a specious cloak for a sort of moral dishonesty. Now I might have known this fact in the beginning, and I scolded and lectured myself for my own folly in not confessing it to myself before. I had been received by the family as a friend. I had been trusted with their chief treasure, with the understanding that it was to belong not to me but another, and there was a species of moral indelicacy to my mind in having suffered myself to become fascinated by her as I now felt that I was. But I did not feel adequate to congratulating her as the betrothed bride of another man ; nay, more, when I looked back on the kind of intimate and confidential relations that had been growing up between us, I could not but feel that it was not safe for me to continue them. Two natures cannot exactly accord, cannot keep time and tune together, without being conscious of the fact and without becoming necessary to each other ; and such relations in their very nature tend to grow absorbing and exclusive. It was plain to me that if Eva were to marry Wat Sydney I could not with honor and safety continue the kind of intimacy we had been so thoughtlessly and so delightfully enjoying for the past few weeks.

But how to break it off without an explanation, and how make that explanation ? There is a certain responsibility resting on a man of conscience and honor, about accepting all that nearness of access, and that closeness of intimacy which the ignorant innocence of young girls often invites, From his very nature, from his education, from his position in society, a young man knows more of what the full significance and requirements of marriage are to be than a young woman can, and he must know the danger of absorbing and exclusive intimacy with other than a husband. The instincts of every man teach that marriage must be engrossing and monopolizing, that it implies a forsaking of all others, and a keeping unto one only ; and how could that be when every taste and feeling, every idiosyncracy and individual peculiarity made the society of some other person more agreeable ?

Without undue personal vanity, a man will surely know when there is a special congeniality of nature between himself and a certain woman, and he is bound in conscience and honor to look ahead in all his intimacies and see what must be the inevitable result of them according to the laws of the human mind. Because I had neglected this caution, because I had yielded myself blindly to the delicious enchantment of a new enthusiasm, I had now come to a place where I knew neither how to advance nor recede.

I could not drop this intimacy, so dangerous to my peace and honor, without risk of offending; to explain was, in fact, to solicit. I might confess all, cast myself at her feet —but supposing she should incline to mercy—and with a woman's uncalculating disinterestedness accept my love in place of wealth and station, what should I then do?

Had I been possessed of a fortune even half equal to Mr. Sydney's; had I, in fact, any settled and assured position to offer, I would have avowed my love boldly and suffered her to decide. But I had no advantage to stand on. I was poor, and had nothing to give but myself; and what man is vain enough to think that he is in himself enough to make up for all that may be wanting in externals?

Besides this, Eva was the daughter of a rich family, and an offer of marriage from me must have appeared to all the world the interested proposal of a fortune-hunter. Of what avail would it be under such circumstances to plead that I loved her for herself alone? I could fancy the shout of incredulous laughter with which the suggestion would be received in the gay world.

"So very thoughtful of the fair!
It showed a true fraternal care.
Five thousand guineas in her purse—
The fellow might have fancied worse."

Now, if there was anything that my pride revolted from as an impossibility, it was coming as a poor suitor to a great rich family. Were I even sure that Eva loved me, how could I do that? Would not all the world say that to make use of my access in the family to draw her down from a splendid position in life to poverty and obscurity was on my part a dishonorable act? Could I trust myself enough to feel that it was justice to her?

The struggle that a young man has to engage in to secure a self-supporting position, is of a kind to make him keenly alive to material values. Dr. Franklin said, "If you would learn the value of money, try to borrow some." I would say rather, Try to earn some, and to live only on what you earn. My own hard experience on this subject led me to reflect very seriously on the responsibility which a man incurs in inducing a woman of refinement and culture to look to him as her provider.

In our advanced state of society there are a thousand absolute wants directly created by culture and refinement; and whatever may be said about the primary importance of personal affection and sympathy as the foundation of a happy marriage, it is undoubtedly true that a certain amount of pecuniary ease and security is necessary as a background on which to develop agreeable qualities. A man and woman much driven, care-worn, and overtaxed, often have little that is agreeable to show to each other. I queried with myself then, whether, as Eva's true friend, I should not wish that she might marry a respectable man, devoted to her, who could keep her in all that elegance and luxury she was so fitted to adorn and enjoy; and whether if I *could* do it, I ought to try to put myself in his place in her mind.

A man who detects himself in an unfortunate passion has always the refuge of his life-object. To the true man, the thing that he hopes to *do* always offers some compensation for the thing he ceases to enjoy.

It was fortunate therefore for me, that just in this crisis of my life, my friendship with Bolton opened before me the prospect of a permanent establishment in connection with the literary press of the times.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A NEW OPENING.

"HENDERSON," said Bolton to me, one day, "how long are you engaged on the *Democracy?*"

"Only for this year," said I.

"Because," said he, "I have something to propose to you which I hope may prove a better thing. Hestermann & Co. sent for me yesterday in secret session. The head manager of their whole set of magazines and papers has resigned, and is going to travel in Europe, and they want me to take the place."

"Good! I am heartily glad of it," said I. "I always felt that you were not in the position that you ought to have. You will accept, of course."

"Whether I accept or not depends on *you*," he replied.

"I cannot understand," said I.

"In short, then," said he, "the responsibility is a heavy one, and I cannot undertake it without a partner whom I can trust as myself—I mean," he added, "whom I can trust *more* than myself."

"You are a thousand times too good," said I. "I should like nothing better than such a partnership, but I feel oppressed by your good opinion. Are you sure that I am the one for you?"

"I think I am," said he, "and it is a case where I am the best judge; and it offers to you just what you want—a stable position, independence to express yourself, and a good income. Hestermann & Co. are rich, and wise enough to know that liberality is the best policy."

"But," said I, "their offers are made to you, and not to me."

"Well, of course, their acquaintance with me is of old standing; but I have spoken to them of you, and I am to bring you round to talk with them to-morrow; but, after all, the whole power of arranging is left with me. They put a certain sum at my disposal, and I do what I please with it. In short," he said, smiling, "I hold the living, and you are my curate. Well," he added, "of course you need time to think matters over; here is paper on which I have made a little memorandum of an arrangement between us; take it and dream on it, and let me know to-morrow what you think of it."

I went to my room and unfolded the agreement, and found the terms liberal beyond all my expectations. In fact, the income of the principal was awarded to me, and that of the subordinate to Bolton.

I took the paper the next evening to Bolton's room. "Look here, Bolton," said I, "these terms are simply absurd."

"How so?" he said, lifting his eyes tranquilly from his book. "What's the matter with them?"

"Why, you give me all the income."

"Wait till you see how I'll work you," he said, smiling. "I'll get it out of you; you see if I don't."

"But you leave yourself nothing."

"I have as much as I would have, and that's enough. I'm a literary monk, you know, with no family but Puss and Stumpy, poor fellow, and I need the less."

Stumpy upon this pricked up his ragged ears with an expression of lively satisfaction, sat back on his haunches, and rapped the floor with his forlorn bit of a tail

"Poor Stumpy," said Bolton, "you don't know that you are the homeliest dog in New York, do you? Well, *as far as you go*, you are perfect goodness, Stumpy, though you are no beauty."

Upon this high praise, Stumpy seemed so elated that he stood on his hind paws and rested his rough fore-feet on Bolton's knee, and looked up with eyes of admiration.

"Man is the dog's God," said Bolton. "I can't conceive how any man can be rude to his dog. A dog," he added, fondling his ragged cur, "why, he's nothing but organized love—love on four feet, encased in fur, and looking piteously out at the eyes—love that would die for you, yet cannot speak—that's the touching part. Stumpy *longs* to speak; his poor dog's breast heaves with something he longs to tell me and can't. Don't it, Stumpy?"

As if he understood his master, Stumpy wheezed a doleful whine, and actual tears stood in his eyes.

"Well," said Bolton, "Stumpy has beautiful eyes; nobody shall deny that—there, there! poor fellow, maybe on the other shore your rough bark will develop into speech; let's hope so. I confess I'm of the poor Indian's mind, and hope to meet my dog in the hereafter. Why should so much love go out in nothing? Yes, Stumpy, we'll meet in the resurrection, won't we?" Stumpy barked aloud with the greatest animation.

"Bolton, you ought to be a family man," said I. "Why do you take it for granted that you are to be a literary monk, and spend your love on dogs and cats?"

"*You* may get married, Hal, and I'll adopt your children," said Bolton; "that's one reason why I want to establish you. You see, one's dogs *will* die, and it breaks one's heart. If *you* had a boy, now, I'd invest in him."

"And why can't you invest in a boy of your own?"

"Oh, I'm a predestined old bachelor."

"No such thing," I persisted, hardily. "Why do you immure yourself in a den? Why won't you go out into society? Here, ever since I've known you, you have been in this one cave—a New York hermit; yet if you would once begin to go into society, you'd like it."

"You think I haven't tried it; you forget that I am some years older than you are," said Bolton.

"You are a good-looking young fellow yet," said I, "and ought to make the most of yourself. Why should you turn all the advantages into my hands, and keep so little for yourself?"

"It suits me," said Bolton; "I am lazy—I mean to get the work out of you."

"That's all hum," said I; "you know well enough that you are not lazy; you take delight in work for work's sake."

"One reason I am glad of this position," he said, "is that it gives me a chance to manage matters a little as I want them. For instance, there's Jim Fellows—I want to make something more than a mad Bohemian of that boy. Jim is one of the wild growths of our New York life; he is a creature of the impulses and the senses, and will be for good or evil according as others use him."

"He's capital company," said I, "but he doesn't seem to me to have a serious thought on any subject."

"And yet," said Bolton, "such is our day and time, that Jim is more likely than you or I to get along in the world. His cap and bells win favor everywhere, and the laugh he raises gives him the privilege of saying anything he pleases. For my part, I couldn't live without Jim. I have a weakness for him. Nothing is so precious to me as a laugh, and, wet or dry, I can always get that out of Jim. He'll work in admirably with us."

"One thing must be said for Jim," said I, "with all his keenness he's kind-hearted. He never is witty at the expense of real trouble. As he says, he goes for the under dog in the fight always, and his cheery, frisky, hit-or-miss morality does many a kind turn for the unfortunate, while he is always ready to help the poor."

"Jim is not of the sort that is going to do the world's thinking for them," said Bolton; "neither will he ever be one of the noble army of martyrs for principle. He is like a lively, sympathetic horse that will keep the step of the team he is harnessed in, and in the department of lively nonsense he'd do us yeoman service. Nowadays people must have truth whipped up to a white froth or they won't touch it. Jim is a capital egg-beater."

"Yes," said I; "he's like the horse that had the GO in him; he'll run any team that he's harnessed in, and if you hold the reins he won't run off the course."

"Then again," said Bolton, "there's your cousin; there is the editorship of our weekly journal will be just the place for her. You can write and offer it to her."

"Pardon me," said I, maliciously, "since you are acquainted with the lady, why not write and offer it yourself? It would be a good chance to renew your acquaintance."

Bolton's countenance changed, and he remained a moment silent.

"Henderson," he said, "there are very painful circumstances connected with my acquaintance with your cousin. I never wish to meet her, or renew my acquaintance with her. Some time I will tell you why," he added.

The next evening I found on my table the following letter from Bolton:

Dear Henderson:—You need feel no hesitancy about accepting in full every advantage in the position I propose to you, since you may find it weighted with disadvantages and incumbrances you do not dream of. In short, I shall ask of you services for which no money can pay, and till I knew you there was no man in the world of whom I had dared to ask them. I want a friend, courageous, calm, and true, capable of thinking broadly and justly, one superior to ordinary prejudices, who may be to me another, and in some hours a stronger, self.

I can fancy your surprise at this language, and yet I have not read you aright if you are not the one of a thousand on whom I may rest this hope.

You often rally me on my lack of enterprise and ambition, on my hermit habits. The truth is, Henderson, I am a strained and unseaworthy craft, for whom the harbor and shore are the safest quarters. I have lost trust in myself, and dare not put out to sea without feeling the strong hand of a friend with me.

I suppose no young fellow ever entered the course of life with more self-confidence. I had splendid health, high spirits, great power of application, and great social powers. I lived freely and carelessly on the abundance of my physical resources. I could ride, and row, and wrestle with the best. I could lead in all social gaieties, yet keep the head of my class, as I did the first two years of my college life. It seems hardly fair to us human beings that we should be so buoyed up with ignorant hope and confidence in the beginning of our life, and that we should be left in our ignorance to make mistakes which no after years can retrieve. I thought I was perfectly sure of myself; I thought my health and strength were inexhaustible, and that I could carry weights that no man else could. The drain of my wide-awake exhausting life upon my nervous system I made up by the insidious use of stimulants. I was like a man habitually overdrawing his capital, and ignorant to what extent. In my third college year this began to tell perceptibly on my nerves. I was losing self-control, losing my way in life; I was excitable, irritable, impatient of guidance or reproof, and at times horribly depressed. I sought refuge from this depression in social exhilaration, and having lost control of myself became a marked man among the college authorities; in short, I was overtaken in a convivial row, brought under college discipline, and suspended.

It was at this time that I went into your neighborhood to study and teach. I found no difficulty in getting the highest recommendations as to scholarship from some of the college officers who were for giving me a chance to recover myself; and for the rest I was thoroughly sobered and determined on a new course. Here commenced my acquaintance with your cousin, and there followed a few months remembered ever since as the purest happiness of my life. I loved her with all there was in me,—heart, soul, mind and strength,—with a love which can never die. She also loved me, more perhaps than she dared to say, for she was young, hardly come to full consciousness of herself. She was then scarcely sixteen, ignorant of her own nature, ignorant of life, and almost frightened at the intensity of the feeling which she excited in me, yet she loved me. But before we could arrive at anything like a calm understanding, her father came between us. He was a trustee of the Academy, and a dispute arose between him and me in which he treated me with an overbearing haughtiness which aroused the spirit of opposition in me. I was in the right and knew I was, and I defended my course before the other trustees in a manner which won them over to my way of thinking—a victory which he never forgave.

Previously to this encounter I had been in the habit of visiting in his family quite intimately. Caroline and I enjoyed that kind of unwatched freedom which the customs of New England allow to young people. I always attended her home from the singing-school and the weekly lectures, and the evening after my encounter with the trustees I did the same. At the door of his house he met us, and as Caroline passed in he stopped me, and briefly saying that my visits there would no longer be permitted, closed the door in my face. I tried to obtain an interview soon after, when he sternly upbraided me as one that had stolen into the village and won their confidence on false pretences, adding that if he and the trustees had known the full history of my college life I should never have been permitted to teach in their village or have access to their families. It was in vain to attempt a defense to a man determined to take the very worst view of facts which I did not pretend to deny. I knew that I had been irreproachable as to my record in the school, that I had been faithful in my duties, that the majority of parents and pupils were on my side; but I could not deny the harsh facts which he had been enabled to obtain from some secret enemy, and which he thought justified him in saying that he would rather see his daughter in her grave than to see her my wife. The next day Caroline did not appear in school. Her father, with prompt energy, took her immediately to an academy fifty miles away.

I did not attempt to follow her or write to her; a profound sense of discouragement came over me, and I looked on my acquaintance with her with a sort of remorse. The truth bitterly told by an enemy with a vivid power of statement is a tonic oftentimes too strong for one's power of endurance. I never reflected so seriously on the responsibility which a man assumes, in awakening the slumbering feelings of a woman, and fixing them on himself. Under the reproaches of Caroline's father I could but regard this as a wrong I had done, and which could be expiated only by leaving her to peace in forgetfulness.

I resolved that I would never let her hear from me again, till I had fully proved myself to be possessed of such powers of self-control as would warrant me in offering to be the guardian of her happiness.

But when I set myself to the work, I found what many another does, that I had reckoned without my host. The man who has begun to live and work by artificial stimulant, never knows where he stands, and can never count upon himself with any certainty. He lets into his castle a servant who becomes the most tyrannical of masters. He may resolve to turn him out, but will find himself reduced to the condition in which he can neither do with nor without him.

In short, the use of stimulant to the brain-power brings on a disease, in whose paroxysms a man is no more his own master than in the ravings of fever, a disease that few have the knowledge to understand, and for whose manifestations the world has no pity.

I cannot tell you the dire despair that came upon me, when after repeated falls, bringing remorse and self-upbraiding to me, and drawing upon me the severest reproaches of my friends, the idea at last flashed upon me that I had indeed become the victim of a sort of periodical insanity in which the power of the will was overwhelmed by a wild unreasoning impulse. I remember when a boy reading an account of a bridal party sailing gaily on the coast of Nor-way who were insidiously drawn into the resistless outer whirl of the great Maelström. The horror of the situation was the moment when the shipmaster learned that the ship *no longer obeyed the rudder;* the cruelty of it was the gradual manner in which the resistless doom came upon them. The sun still shone, the sky was still blue. The shore, with its green trees and free birds and blooming flowers, was near and visible as they went round and round in dizzy whirls, past the church with its peaceful spire, past the home cottages, past the dwellings of friends and neighbors, past parents, brothers, and sisters who stood on the shore warning and shrieking and entreating; helpless, hopeless, with bitterness in their souls, with all that made life lovely so near in sight, and yet cut off from it by the swirl of that tremendous fate!

There have been just such hours to me, in which I have seen the hopes of manhood, the love of woman, the possession of a home, the opportunities for acquisition of name, and position, and property, all within sight, within grasp, yet all made impossible by my knowledge and consciousness of the deadly drift and suction of that invisible whirlpool.

The more of manliness there yet is left in man in these circumstances, the more torture. The more sense of honor, love of reputation, love of friends, conscience in duty, the more anguish. I read once a frightful story of a woman whose right hand was changed to a serpent, which at intervals was roused to fiendish activity and demanded of her the blood of her nearest and dearest friends. The hideous curse was inappeasable, and the doomed victim spell-bound, powerless to resist. Even so the man who has lost the control of his will is driven to torture those he loves, while he shivers with horror and anguish at the sight.

I have seen the time when I gave earnest thanks that no woman loved me, that I had no power to poison the life of a wife with the fear, and terror, and lingering agony of watching the slow fulfillment of such a doom.

It is enough to say that with every advantage—of friends, patronage, position—I lost *all*.

The world is *exigéant*. It demands above everything that every man shall keep step. He who cannot, falls to the rear, and is gradually left behind as the army moves on.

The only profession left to me was one which could avail itself of my lucid intervals.

The power of clothing thought with language is in our day growing to be a species of talent for which men are willing to pay, and I have been able by this to make myself a name and a place in the world; and what is more, I hope to do some good in it.

I have reflected upon my own temptation, endeavoring to divest myself of the horror with which my sense of the suffering and disappointment I have caused my friends inspires me. I have settled in my own mind the limits of human responsibility on this subject, and have come to the conclusion that it is to be regarded precisely as Mary Lamb and Charles Lamb regarded the incursion of the mania which destroyed the peace of their life. A man who undertakes to comprehend, and cure himself, has to fight his way back alone. Nobody understands, nobody sympathizes with him, nobody helps him—not because the world is unfeeling, but because it is ignorant of the laws which govern this species of insanity.

It took me, therefore, a great while to form my system of self-cure. I still hope for this. *I*, the sane and sound, *I* hope to provide for the insane and unsound intervals of my life. And my theory is, briefly, a *total* and *eternal* relinquishment of the poisonous influence, so that nature may have power to organize new and healthy brain-matter, and to remove that which is diseased. Nature will do this, in the end, for she is ever merciful; there is always "forgiveness with her, that she may be feared." Since you have known me, you have seen that I live the life of an anchorite—that my hours are regular, that I avoid exciting society, that I labor with uniformity, and that I never touch any stimulating drink. It is a peculiarity of cases like mine that for lengths of time the morbid disease leaves us, and we feel the utmost aversion to any thing of the kind. But there is always a danger lying behind this subtle calm. Three or four drops of alcohol, such as form the basis of a tincture which a doctor will order without scruple, will bring back the madness. One five-minutes inadvertence will upset the painful work of years, and carry one away as with a flood. When I did not know this, I was constantly falling. Society through all its parts is full of traps and pitfalls for such as I, and the only refuge is in flight.

It has been part of my rule of life to avoid all responsibilities that might involve others in my liability to failure. It is now a very long time since I have felt any abnormal symptoms, and if I had not so often been thrown down after such a period of apparent calm, I might fancy my dangers over, and myself a sound man.

The younger Hestermann was a class-mate and chum of mine in college, and one whose friendship for me has held on through thick and thin. He has a trust in me that imposes on me a painful sense of responsibility. I would not fail him for a thousand worlds, yet if one of my hours of darkness should come I should fail ignominiously.

Only one motive determined me to take their offer—it gave me a chance to provide for you and for Caroline.

I dare do it only through trusting you for a friendship beyond that of the common; in short, for a brotherly kindness such as Charles Lamb showed to Mary, his sister. If the curse returns upon me, you must not let me ruin myself and you; you must take me to an asylum till I recover.

In asking this of you, I am glad to be able to offer what will be to you an independent position, and give you that home and fireside which I may not dare to hope for myself.

In the end, I expect to conquer, either here or hereafter. I believe in the Fatherhood of God, and that He has a purpose even in letting us blindly stumble through life as we do; and through all my weakness and unworthiness still hold his hand. I *know* that the whole temptation is one of brain and nerves, and when He chooses he can release me. The poor brain will be cold and still for good and all some day, and *I* shall be free and able to see, I trust, why I have been suffered thus to struggle. After all, *immortality* opens a large hope, that may overpay the most unspeakable bitterness of life.

Meanwhile, you can see why I do not wish to be brought into personal relations with the only woman I have ever loved, or ever can love, and whose happiness I fear to put in peril. It is an unspeakable delight and relief to have this power of doing for her, but she must not know of it.

Also, let me tell you that you are to me more transparent than you think. It requires only the penetration of friendship to see that you are in love, and that you hesitate and hang back because of an unwillingness to match your fortunes with hers.

Let me suggest, do you not owe it as a matter of justice, after so much intimacy as has existed, to give her the opportunity to choose between a man and circumstances? If the arrangement between us goes into effect, you will have a definite position and a settled income. Go to her like a man and lay it before her, and if she is worthy of you she will come to you.

"He either dreads his fate too much,
Or his desert is small,
Who fears to put it to the touch,
To win or lose it all."

God grant you a home and fireside, Harry, and I will be the indulgent uncle in the chimney-corner.

Yours ever, BOLTON

CHAPTER XXX.

PERTURBATIONS.

SCENE.—*Ida's Study—Ida busy making notes from a book—Eva sitting by, embroidering.*

EVA—"Heigho! how stupid things are. I am tired of everything. I am tired of shopping—tired of parties—tired of New York—where the same thing keeps happening over and over. I wish I was a man. I'd just take my carpet-bag and go to Europe. Come now, Ida, pray stop that, and talk to me, do!"

Ida, putting down her book and pen:

"Well—and what about?"

"Oh, you know!—this inextricable puzzle—what does ail a certain person? Now he didn't come at all last night, and when I asked Jim Fellows where his friend was (one must pass the compliment of inquiring, you know), he said, 'Henderson had grown dumpy lately,' and he couldn't get him out anywhere."

"Well, Eva, I'm sure I can't throw any light on the subject. I know no more than you."

"Now, Ida, let me tell you, this afternoon when we stopped in the park, I went into that great rustic arbor on the top of the hill there, and just as we came in on one side, I saw him in all haste hurrying out on the other, as if he were afraid to meet me."

"How very odd!"

"Odd! Well, I should think it was; but what was worse, he went and stationed himself on a bench under a tree where he could hear and see us, and there my lord sat—perhaps he thought I didn't see him, but I did.

"Lillie and Belle Forrester and Wat Jerrold were with me, and we were having such a laugh! I don't know when I have had such a frolic, and how silly it was of him to sit there glowering like an owl in an ivy bush, when he might have come out and joined us, and had a good time! I'm quite out of patience with the creature, it's so vexatious to have him act so!"

"It is vexatious, darling, but then as you can't do anything about it why think of it?"

"Because I can't help it. Can you have a real friendship for a person and enjoy his society, and not care in the least whether you have it or not? Of course you can't. We were friends—quite good friends, and I'm not ashamed to say I miss him very much, and then to have such an unaccountable mystery about it. I should think you'd miss him too."

"I do somewhat," said Ida, "but then you see I have so much more to think of. I have my regular work every day for papa, and I have my plan of study, and to say the truth, so far as I am concerned, though I liked Mr. Henderson very much, yet I don't miss him."

"Well, Ida, now I want to ask you, didn't you think he acted as if——"

"As if he were in love with you, you would say."

"Well—yes."

"He certainly did, if I am any judge of symptoms; but then, dear, men are often in love with women they don't mean to marry."

"Who wants to marry him, I should like to know? I'm not thinking of that."

"Well, then, Eva, perhaps he has discovered that *he* wants to marry you; and, perhaps, for some reason he regards that as impossible, and so is going to try to keep away."

"How perfectly hateful and stupid of him! I'd rather never have seen him."

"A man generally has this advantage over a woman in a matter of this sort, that he has an object in life which is more to him than anything else, and he can fill his whole mind with that."

"Well, Ida, that's all very true, but what object in life can a girl have who lives as we do; who has everything she can want without an effort—I for instance."

"But *I* have an object."

"Yes, I know you have, but I am different from you. It would be as impossible for me to do as you do, as for a fish to walk upright on dry land."

"Well, Eva, this objectless, rootless, floating kind of life that you and almost all girls lead, is at the bottom of nearly all your troubles. Literally and truly you have nothing in the world to do but to amuse yourselves; the consequence is that you soon get tired of almost every kind of amusement, and so every friendship and flirtation assumes a disproportioned interest in your minds. There is real danger now that you may think too much of Mr."——

"Oh, stuff and nonsense, Ida! I *won't*, so there! I'll put him out of my head forthwith and bolt the door. Give me a good stiff dose of reading, Ida; one of your dullest scientific books, and get me to write you an analysis of it as we did at school. Here, let me see, 'Descent of Man.' Come, now, I'll sit down and go at it."

Eva sits down with book, pencil and paper, and turns over the leaves.

"Let's try how it looks. 'Sexual Selection'! Oh, horrid! 'Her Ape-like Proportions'! I should be ashamed to talk so about my ancestors. Apes!—of all things—why not some more respectable animal? lions or horses, for example. You remember Swift's story about the houyhnhnms. Isn't this a dreadfully dull book, Ida?"

"No, I don't find it so. I am deeply interested in it, though I admit it is pretty heavy."

"But, then, Ida, you see it goes against the Bible, doesn't it?"

"Not necessarily as I see."

"Why, yes; to be sure. I haven't read it; but Mr. Henderson gave me the clearest kind of a sketch of the argument, and that is the way it impressed me. That to be sure is among the things I principally value him for; he is my milk-skimmer; he gets all the cream that rises on a book and presents it to me in a portable form. I remember one of the very last really comfortable long talks we had; it was on this subject, and I told him that it seemed to me that the modern theory and the Bible were point blank opposites. Instead of men being a *fallen* race, they are a *rising* race, and never so high as now; and then, what becomes of the Garden of Eden, and St. Paul? Now, for my part, I told Mr. Henderson I wasn't going to give up all the splendid poetry of Milton and the Bible, just because Mr. Darwin took it into his head that it was not improbable that my seventy fifth millionth grandfather might have been a big baboon with green nose and pointed ears!"

"My dear Eva, you have capital reasons for believing and *not* believing. You believe what seems most agreeable and poetic."

"Exactly, Ida; and in those far-off regions, sixteen million billion ages ago why shouldn't I? Nobody knows what happened there; nobody has been there to see what made the first particle of jelly take to living, and turn into a germ cell, and then go working on like yeast, till it worked out into all the things we see. I think it a good deal easier to believe the Garden of Eden story, especially as that is pretty and poetical, and is in the dear old Book that is so sweet and comfortable to us; but then Mr. Henderson insists that even if we do hold the Evolution theory, the old book will be no less true. I never saw a man of so much thought who had so much reverence."

"I thought you were going to study Darwin and not think of him," said Ida.

"Well, somehow, almost every thing puts me in mind of him, because we have had such long talks about everything; and, Ida, to tell the truth, I do believe I am intellectually lazy. I don't like rough hard work, I like polishing and furbishing. Now, I want a man to go through all this rough, hard, stupid, disagreeable labyrinth of scientific terms, and pick out the meaning and put it into a few, plain words, and then I take it and brighten it up and put on the rainbows. Look here, now, think of my having to scrabble through a bog like this in the "Origin of Species":

"'In Carthamus and some other compositæ the central achenes alone are furnished with a pappus; and in Hyoseris the same head yields achenes of three different forms. In certain Umbelliferæ the exterior seeds, according to Tanch, are orthospermous, and the central one cœlospermous, and this difference has been considered by De Candolle as of the highest systematic importance in the family.'

"Now all this is just as unintelligible to me as if it were written in Choctaw. I don't know enough to know what it means, and I'm afraid I don't care enough to know. I want to know the upshot of the whole in good plain English, and then see whether I can believe it or not; and isn't it a shame that things are so that one cannot have a sensible man to be one's guide, philosopher and friend, without this everlasting marriage question coming up? If a woman makes an effort to get or keep a valuable friend, she is supposed to be intriguing and making unfeminine efforts for a husband. Now this poor man is perfectly wretched about something—for I can see he has really gone off shockingly, and looks thin and haggard, and I can't just write him a note and ask him to come and finish his resumé of Darwin for me, without going over the boundaries; and the worst of it is, it is *I* who set these limits;—I myself who am a world too proud to say the first word or give the slightest indication that his absence isn't quite as agreeable as his presence."

"Well, Eva, I can write a note and request him to call and see *me*," said Ida, "and if you like, I will. I have no sort of fear what he will think of me."

"I would not have you for the world. It would look like an advance on our part—no indeed. These creatures are so conceited, if they once find out that you can't do without them——"

"I never observed any signs of conceit in Mr. Henderson."

"Well, I have made it an object to keep him a little humble, so far as his sex will permit, you see. But seriously Ida, is not it curious about this marriage matter? Everybody says it's what we are made for, all the novels end with it, all the poems are about it, you are hearing about it in one way or other all the time; and yet all this while you are supposed not to care anything about it one way or the other. If a man be ever so agreeable to you, and do ever so much to make you like him, you must pretend that you are quite indifferent to him, and don't care whether he comes or goes, until such time as he chooses to launch the tremendous question at you."

"Well," said Ida, "I admit that there is just this absurdity in our life: but I avoid it all by firmly laying a plan of my own, and having a business of my own. To me marriage would be an interruption; it would require a breaking up and reconstruction of my whole plan, and of course I really think nothing about it."

"But are you firmly resolved never to marry?"

"No; but never, unless I find some one more to me than all on which I have set my heart. I do not need it for my happiness. I am sufficient to myself; and besides I have an object I hope to attain, and that is to open a way by which many other women shall secure independence and comfort and ease."

"Deary me, Ida, I wish I were like you: but I'm not. It seems to me that the only way to give most girls any concentration or object is to marry them. Then, somehow, things seem to arrange themselves, and, at all events, the world stops talking about you, and wondering what you are going to do; they get you off their minds. That I do believe was the reason why at one time I came so near drifting into that affair with Wat Sydney. Aunt Maria was so vigorous with me and talked in such a commanding manner, and with so many 'of courses,' that I really began to think I was one of the 'of courses' myself; but my acquaintance with Mr. Henderson has shown me that it would be intolerable to live with a man that you couldn't talk with about everything that comes into your head; and now I can't talk with him, and I won't marry Wat Sydney; and so what is to be done? Shall I go to Stewart's and buy me a new suit of Willow Green, or gird up the loins of my mind and go through Darwin like a man, and look out all the terms in the dictionary and come out the other side a strong-minded female? or shall I go and join the Sisters of St. John, and wear a great white cape and gray gown, and have all the world say I did it because I couldn't get Wat Sydney (for that's exactly what they would say), or what shall I do? The trouble is, mamma and Aunt Maria with their expectations. It's much as mamma can do to survive *your* course, and if *I* take to having a 'purpose' too, I don't know but mamma would commit suicide, poor dear woman."

(Enter Alice with empressement):

"Girls, what do you think? Wat Sydney come back and going to give a great croquet party out at Clairmont, and of course we are all invited with notes in the most resplendent style, with crest and coat of arms, and everything —perfectly '*mag!*' There's to be a steamboat with a band of music to take the guests up, and no end of splendid doings; marquées and tents and illuminations and fireworks, and to return by moonlight after all's over; isn't it lovely? I do think Wat Sydney's perfectly splendid! and it's all on your account, Eva, I know it is."

"Pooh, nonsense, you absurd child, I don't believe it. I dare say it's a party just to proclaim that he is engaged to somebody else."

"Do you know," added Alice, "I met Jim Fellows, and he says everybody is wild about this party—just stark, tearing wild about it—for it isn't going to be a crush—something *very* select."

"Is Jim going?"

"Yes, he showed me his ticket and Henderson's, and he declared he was going to take 'Hal,' as he called him, spite of his screams; he said that he had been writing and studying and moping himself to death, and that he should drag him out by the hair of the head. Come, Eva, let's go down to Tullegig's and have a 'kank' about costumes. I haven't a thing fit to wear, nor you either."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FATES.

BOLTON'S letter excited in my mind a tumult of feeling. From the beginning of my acquaintance I had regarded him with daily increasing admiration. Young men like a species of mental fealty—a friendship that seems to draw them upward and give them an ideal of something above themselves. Bolton's ripe, elegant scholarship, his rare, critical taste, his calm insight into men and things, and the depth of his moral judgment, had inspired me with admiration, and his kindness for me with gratitude. It had always been an additional source of interest that there was something veiled about him—something that I could not exactly make out. This letter, so dignified in its melancholy frankness, seemed to let me into the secret of his life. It showed me the reason of that sort of sad and weary tolerance with which he seemed to regard life and its instincts, so different from the fiery, forward-looking hope of youth. He had impressed me from the first as one who had made up his mind to endure all things and hope for nothing. To keep watch every moment, to do the duty of the hour thoroughly, bravely, faithfully, as a sentinel paces through wind, rain and cold—neither asking why, nor uttering complaints—such seemed to be Bolton's theory of life.

The infirmity which he laid open to my view was one, to be sure, attributable in the first place to the thoughtless wrong-doing of confident youth. Yet, in its beginning, how little there was in it that looked like the deep and terrible tragedy to which it was leading! Out of every ten young men who begin the use of stimulants as a social exhilaration, there are perhaps five in whose breast lies coiled up and sleeping this serpent, destined in after years to be the deadly tyrant of their life—this curse, unappeasable by tears or prayers or agonies—with whom the struggle is like that of Laocoön with the hideous Python. Yet songs and garlands and poetry encircle the wine-cup, and ridicule and contumely are reserved for him who fears to touch it.

There was about this letter such a patient dignity, such an evident bracing of the whole man to meet in the bravest manner the hard truth of the situation, and such a disinterested care for others, as were to me inexpressibly touching. I could not help feeling that he judged and sentenced himself too severely, and that this was a case where a noble woman might fitly co-work with a man, and by doubling his nature give it double power of resistance and victory.

I went hastily up to his room with the letter in my hand after reading it. It was in the dusk of the evening twilight, but I could see him sitting there gazing out of the window at the fading sky; yet it was too dark for either of us to see the face of the other. There are some conversations that can only be held in darkness—the visible presence of the bodily form is an impediment—in darkness, spirit speaks directly to spirit.

"Bolton," I said, "I am *yours* to every intent and purpose, yours for life and death."

"And *after*," he said in a deep undertone, grasping my hand. "I knew you would be, Harry."

"But, Bolton, you judge yourself too severely. Why should you put from yourself the joys that other men, not half so good as you, claim eagerly? If I were a woman like Caroline, I can feel that I would rather share life with you, in all your dangers and liabilities, than with many another."

He thought a moment, and then said slowly, "It is well for Caroline that she has not this feeling; she probably has by this time forgotten me, and I would not for the world take the responsibility of trying to call back the feeling she once had."

At this moment my thoughts went back over many scenes, and the real meaning of all Caroline's life came to me. I appreciated the hardness of that lot of women which condemns them to be tied to one spot and one course of employment, when needing to fly from the atmosphere of an unhappy experience. I thought of the blank stillness of the little mountain town where her life had been passed, of her restlessness and impatience, of that longing to fly to new scenes and employments that she had expressed to me on the eve of my starting for Europe; yet she had told me her story, leaving out the one vital spot in it. I remembered her saying that she had never seen the man with whom she would think of marriage without a shudder. Was it because she had forgotten? Or was it that woman never even to herself admits that thought in connection with one who seems to have forgotten her? Or had her father so harshly painted the picture of her lover that she had been led to believe him utterly vile and unprincipled? Perhaps his proud silence had been interpreted by her as the silence of indifference; perhaps she looked back on their acquaintance with indignation that she should have been employed merely to diversify the leisure of a rusticated student and abandoned character. Whatever the experience might be, Caroline had carried it through silently.

Her gay, indifferent, brilliant manner of treating any approach to matters of the heart, as if they were the very last subjects in which she could be supposed to have any experience or interest, had been a complete blind to me, nor could I, through this dazzling atmosphere, form the least conjecture as to how the land actually lay.

In my former letters to her I had dwelt a good deal on Bolton, and mentioned the little fact of finding her photograph in his room. In reply, in a postscript at the end of a letter about everything else, there was a brief notice. "The Mr. Bolton you speak of taught the Academy in our place while you were away at college—and of course I was one of his scholars—but I have never seen or heard of him since. I was very young then, and it seems like something in a preëxistent state to be reminded of him. I believed him very clever, then, but was not old enough to form much of an opinion." I thought of all this as I sat silently in the dark with Bolton.

"Are you sure," I said, "that you consult for Caroline's best happiness in doing as you have done?"

There was a long pause, and at last he said with a deep drawn breath,

"Yes. I am sure, the less I am to her the better."

"But may not your silence and apparent neglect and indifference have given pain?"

"Probably; but they helped her to cease caring for me; it was necessary that she should."

"Bolton, you are morbid in your estimate of yourself."

"You do not know all, Hal; nor what nor where I have been. I have been swept far out to sea, plunged under deep waters, all the waves and billows have been over me."

"Yet now, Bolton, surely you are on firm land. No man is more established, more reliable, more useful."

"Yet," he said with a kind of shudder, "all this I might lose in a moment. The other day when I dined with Westerford, the good fellow had his wines in all frank fellowship and pressed them on me, and the very smell distracted me. I looked at the little glass in which he poured some particularly fine sherry, and held to me to taste, and thought it was like so much heart's blood. If I had taken one taste, just one, I should have been utterly worthless and unreliable for weeks. Yet Westerford could not understand this; nobody can, except one who has been through my bitter experience. One sip would flash to the brain like fire, and then, all fear, all care, all conscience would be gone, and not one glass, but a dozen would be inevitable, and then you might have to look for me in some of those dens to which the possessed of the devil flee when the fit is on them, and where they rave and tear and cut themselves with stones till the madness is worn out. This has happened to me over and over, after long periods of self-denial and self-control and illusive hope. It seems to me that my experience is like that of a man whom some cruel fiend condemns to go through all the agonies of drowning over and over again—the dark plunge, the mad struggle, the suffocation, the horror the agony, the clutch at the shore, the weary clamber up steep rocks, the sense of relief, recovery, and hope, only to be wrenched off and thrown back to struggle, and strangle, and sink again."

He spoke with such a deep intensity of voice that I drew in my breath, and a silence as of the grave fell between us.

"Harry," he said, after a pause, "you know we read in the Greek tragedies of men and women whom the gods have smitten with unnatural and guilty purposes, in which they were irresistibly impelled toward what they abominated and shuddered at! Is it not strange that the Greek fable should have a real counterpart in the midst of our modern life? That young men in all the inexperience and thoughtlessness of youth should be beguiled into just such a fatality; that there should be a possibility that they could be blighted by just such a doom, and yet that song, and poetry, and social illusion, and society customs should all be thrown around courses which excite and develop this fatality! What opera is complete without its drinking chorus? I remember when it used to be my forte to sing drinking songs; so the world goes! Men triumph and rejoice going to a doom to which death is a trifle. If I had fallen dead, the first glass of wine I tasted, it would have been thought a horrible thing; but it would have been better for my mother, better for me, than to have lived as I did."

"Oh, no, no, Bolton! don't say so: you become morbid in dwelling on this subject."

"No, Hal. I only know more of it than you. This curse has made life an unspeakable burden, a doom instead of a privilege. It has disappointed my friends, and subjected me to such humiliations and agonies that death seems to me a refuge; and yet it was all in its beginning mere thoughtlessness and ignorance. I was lost before I knew it."

"But you are not lost, and you shall not be!" I exclaimed, "you are good for more than most men now, and you will come through this."

"Never! to be just as others are. I shall be a vessel with a crack in it, always."

"Well, a vase of fine porcelain with a crack in it is better than earthenware without," I said.

"If I had not disappointed myself and my friends so often," said Bolton, "I might look on myself as sound and sane. But the mere sight and smell of the wine at Westerford's dinner gave me a giddy sensation that alarmed me; it showed that I was not yet out of danger, and it made me resolve to strengthen myself by making you my keeper. You have the advantage of perfectly healthy nerves that have come to manhood without the strain of any false stimulus, and you can be strong for both of us."

"God grant it!" said I, earnestly.

'But I warn you that, if the curse comes upon me, you are not to trust me. I am a Christian and a man of honor in my sane moments, but let me tell you one glass of wine would make me a liar on this subject. I should lie, and intrigue, and deceive the very elect, to get at the miserable completion of the aroused fury, and there are times when I am so excited that I fear I may take that first irrevocable step; it is a horror, a nightmare, a temptation of the devil,—for that there is a devil, men with my experience know; but there is a kind of safety in having a friend of a steady pulse with me who knows all. The mere fact that you do know helps hold me firm."

"Bolton," said I, "the situation you offer to Caroline in the care of the *Ladies' Cabinet* will of course oblige her to come to New York. Shall you meet her and renew your acquaintance?"

"I do not desire to," he said.

There was a slight hesitancy and faltering of his voice as he spoke.

"Yet it can hardly be possible that you will not meet; you will have arrangements to make with her."

"That is one of the uses, among others, of having you. All that relates to her affairs will pass through you; and now, let us talk of the magazine and its programme for the season. What is the reason, Hal, that you waste your forces in short sketches? Why do you not boldly dash out into a serial story? Come, now, I am resolved among other things on a serial story by Harry Henderson."

"And I will recommend a taking title," cried Jim Fellows, who came in as we were talking, and stood behind my chair. "Let us have

HENDERSON'S HORROR; or, The Mystery of the Bloody Latch-Key.

There's a title to take with the reflecting public! The readers of serials are generally girls from twelve to twenty, and they read them with their back-hair down, lounging on the bed, just before a nap after dinner, and there must be enough blood and thunder, and murder and adultery and mystery in them to keep the dear creatures reading at least half an hour."

"I think serial stories are about played out in our day," said I.

"Not a bit of it. There's sister Nell, don't read anything else. She is regularly running on five serial stories, and among them all they keep her nicely a-going; and she tells me that the case is the same with all the girls in her set. The knowledge of the world and of human nature that the pretty creatures get in this way is something quite astounding. Nell is at present deeply interested in a fair lady who connives with her chambermaid to pass off her illegitimate child upon her husband as his own; and we have lying and false swearing, I say nothing of all other kinds of interesting things on every page. Of course this is written as a moral lesson, and interspersed with pious reflections to teach girls as how they hadn't oughter do so and so. All this, you see, has a refining effect upon the rising generation."

"But, really, Bolton, don't you think that it is treating our modern society as children, to fall in with this extreme fashion of story-telling? It seems so childish to need pictures and stories for everything. Isn't your magazine strong enough to lead and form public taste instead of following it?"

"Well, if I owned my magazine I would try it," said Bolton. "But, you see, the Westerfords, while they give me *carte blanche* as to means to run it, expect of course that it is to be run in the approved popular grooves that the dear thoughtless ten million prefer. The people who lounge on beds after dinner are our audience, and there must be nothing wiser nor stronger than they can apprehend between sleeping and waking. We talk to a *blasé*, hurried, unreflecting, indolent generation, who want emotion and don't care for reason. Something sharp and spicy, something pungent and stinging—no matter what or whence. And now as they want this sort of thing, why not give it to them? Are there no other condiments for seasoning stories besides intrigues, lies, murders, and adulteries? And if the young and unreflecting will read stories shouldn't some of the thoughtful and reflecting make stories for them to read?"

"Of course they should, Q. E. D.," said Jim Fellows, touching the gas with a match, and sending a flare of light upon our conference. "But come, now, behold the last novelty of the season," said he, tossing two cards of invitation. "This is for us, as sons of the press and recording angels, to be present at Wat Sydney's grand blow-out next Tuesday. All the rank and fashion are to go. It is to be very select, and there are people who would give their eye-teeth for these cards, and can't get 'em. How do ye say, Old Man of the Mountain, will you go?"

"No," said Bolton; "not my line."

"Well, at all events, Hal has got to go. I promised the fair Alice that I'd bring him if I had to take him by the hair."

I had a great mind to decline. I thought in my heart it was not at all the wisest thing for me to go; but then, *Amare et sapere vix Deo*—I had never seen Sydney, and I had a restless desire to see him and Eva together—and I thought of forty good reasons why I should go.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE GAME OF CROQUET.

NOW I advise all serious, sensible individuals who never intend to do anything that is not exactly most reasonable and most prudent, and who always do exactly as they intend, not to follow my steps on the present occasion, for I am going to do exactly what is *not* to be recommended to young gentlemen in my situation, and certainly what is not at all prudent.

For if a young man finds himself, without recall, hopelessly in love with one whose smiles are all for another, his best way is to keep out of her society, and in a course of engrossing business that will leave him as little time to think of her as possible.

I had every advantage for pursuing this course, for I had a press of writing upon me, finishing up a batch of literary job-work which I wished to get fairly out of the way so that I might give my whole energies to Bolton in our new enterprise. In fact, to go off philandering to a croquet party up the North River was a sheer piece of childish folly, and the only earthly reason I could really give for it was the presence of a woman there that I had resolved to avoid. In fact I felt that the thing was so altogether silly that I pretended to myself that I was impregnably resolved against it, and sat myself down in Bolton's room making abstracts from some of his books, knowing all the while that Jim would seek me out there and have his moral fish-hook fast in my coat collar, as in truth he did.

"Come, come, Hal," he said, bursting in, "I promised the divinest of her sex to bring you along."

"Oh nonsense, Jim! it's out of the question," said I. "I've got to get this article done."

"Oh, you be hanged with your article, come along! What's the use of a fellow's shutting himself up with books? I tell you, Hal, if you're going to write for *folks* you must *see* folks and folks must see you, and you must be around and into and a part of all that's going on. Come on! Why, you don't know the honor done you. It's a tip-top select party, and all the handsomest girls and all the nobby fellows will be there, and no end of fun. Sydney's place alone is worth going to see. It's the crack place on the river; and then they say the engagement is going to be declared, and everybody is wild to know whether it is or isn't to be, and the girls are furbishing up fancy suits to croquet in. Miss Alice treated me to a glimpse of hers as I met her on Tullegig's steps, and it's calculated to drive a fellow crazy, and so *come now*," said Jim, pulling away my papers and laying hold of me, "let's go out and get some gloves and proceed to make ourselves up. We have the press to represent, and we must be nobby, so hang expense! here's for Jouvin's best, and let to-morrow take care of itself."

Now, seconding all these temptations was that perverse inclination that makes every man want to see a little more and taste a little more of what he has had too much already. Moreover I wanted to see Eva and Wat Sydney together. I wanted to be certain and satisfy myself with my own eyes, not only that they were engaged but that she was in love with him. If she be, said I to myself, she is certainly an exquisite coquette and a dangerous woman for me to keep up an acquaintance with

In thinking over as I had done since Mrs. Van Arsdel's motherly conversation, all our intercourse and acquaintance with each other, her conduct sometimes seemed to me to be that of a veritable "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," bent on amusing herself, and diversifying the tedium of fashionable life by exciting feelings which she had no thought of returning. When I took this view of matters I felt angry and contemptuous, and resolved to show the fair lady that I could be as indifferent as she. Sometimes I made myself supremely wretched by supposing that it was by her desire that Mrs. Van Arsdel had held the conversation with me, and that it was a sort of intimation that she had perceived my feelings, and resolved to put a decided check upon them. But of course nothing so straightforward and sensible as going to her for an explanation of all this was to be thought of. In fact our intercourse with one another ever since the memorable occasion I refer to had been daily lessening, and now was generally limited to passing the most ordinary common-places with each other. She had grown cold and dry, almost haughty, and I was conscious of a most unnatural rigidity and constraint. It seemed to me sometimes astonishing when I looked back a little, to reflect how perfectly easy and free and unconstrained we always had been up to a certain point, to find that now we met with so little enjoyment, talked and said so little to any purpose. It was as if some evil enchanter had touched us with his wand stiffening every nerve of pleasure. To look forward to meeting her in society was no longer, as it had been, to look forward to delightful hours; and yet for the life of me I could not help going where this most unsatisfactory, tantalizing intercourse was all I had to hope for.

But to-day, I said to myself, I would grasp the thorns of the situation so firmly as to break them down and take a firm hold on reality. If, indeed, her engagement were to-day to be declared, I would face the music like a man, walk up to her and present my congratulations in due form, and then the acquaintance would make a gallant finale in the glare of wedding lamps and the fanfaronade of wedding festivities, and away to fresh fields and pastures new.

In short, whatever a man is secretly inclined to do there are always a hundred sensible incontrovertible reasons to be found for doing, and so I found myself one of the gay and festive throng on board the steamer. A party of well-dressed people floating up the North River of a bright Spring day is about as ideal a picture of travel as can be desired. In point of natural scenery the Rhine is nothing compared with the Hudson, and our American steamboats certainly are as far ahead of any that ever appeared on the Rhine as Aladdin's palace is ahead of an ordinary dwelling. The most superb boat on the river had been retained for the occasion, and a band of music added liveliness to the scene as we moved off from the wharf in triumph, as gay, glittering, festive a company as heart could wish.

Wat Sydney as host and entertainer was everywhere present, making himself agreeable by the most devoted attentions to the comfort of the bright band of tropical birds, fluttering in silks and feathers and ribbons, whom he had charge of for the day. I was presented to him by Jim Fellows, and had an opportunity to see that apart from his immense wealth he had no very striking personal points to distinguish him from a hundred other young men about him. His dress was scrupulously adjusted, with a care and nicety which showed that he was by no means without consideration of the personal impression he made. Every article was the choicest and best that the most orthodox fashionable emporiums pronounced the latest thing, or as Jim Fellows phrased it, decidedly "nobby." He was of a medium height, with very light hair and eyes, and the thin complexion which usually attends that style, and which, under the kind of exposure incident to a man's life, generally tends to too much redness of face.

Altogether, my first running commentary on the man as I shook hands with him was, that if Eva were in love with him it was not for his beauty; yet I could see glances falling on him on all sides from undeniably handsome eyes that would have excused any man for having a favorable conceit of his own personal presence.

Mr. Sydney was well accustomed to being the cynosure of female eyes, and walked the deck with the assured step of a man certain of pleasing. A rich good-humored young man who manifests himself daily in splendid turnouts, who rains down flowers and confectionery among his feminine acquaintances, and sends diamonds and pearls as philopœna presents, certainly does not need a romantic style of beauty or any particular degree of mental culture to make his society more than acceptable. Prudent mammas were generally of opinion that the height of felicity for a daughter would be the position that should enable her to be the mistress and dictatrix of his ample fortune. Mr. Sydney was perfectly well aware of this state of things. He was a man a little *blasé* with the kind attentions of matrons, and tolerably secure of the good-will of very charming young ladies. He had the prestige of success, and had generally carried his points in the world of men and things. Miss Eva Van Arsdel had been the first young lady who had given him the novel sensation of a repulse, and thenceforth became an object of absorbing interest in his eyes. Under the careless good-humor of his general appearance Sydney had a constitutional pertinacity, a persistence in his own way that had been a source of many of his brilliant successes in business. He was one of those whom obstacles and difficulties only stimulate, and whose tenacity of purpose increases with resistance. He was cautious, sagacious, ready to wait and watch and renew the attack at intervals, but never to give up. To succeed was a tribute to his own self-esteem, and whatever was difficult of attainment was the more valuable.

A little observation during the course of the first hour convinced me that there was as yet no announcement of an engagement. Mrs. Van Arsdel and Aunt Maria Wouvermans, to be sure, were on most balmy and confidential terms with Mr. Sydney, addressing him with every appearance of mysterious intimacy, and quite willing to produce the impression that the whole fête was in some manner a tribute to the family, but these appearances were not carried out by any coöperative movements on the part of Eva herself. She appeared radiant in a fanciful blue croquet suit which threw out to advantage the golden shade of her hair, and the pink sea-shell delicacy of her cheek, and as usual she had her court around her and was managing her circle with the address of a practiced *habituée* of society.

> "Favors to none, to all she smiles extends,
> Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
> Bright as the sun, her beams the gazers strike,
> And like the sun, they smile on all alike."

Unlike many of her sex, Eva had the faculty of carrying the full cup of bellehood without spilling an unseemly drop, and as she was one of those who seem to have quite as much gift in charming her feminine as her masculine acquaintances, she generally sat surrounded by an admiring body-guard of girls who laughed at her jests and echoed her bon-mots and kept up a sort of radiant atmosphere of life and motion and gayety around her. Her constitutional good-nature, her readiness to admire other people, and to help each in due season to some small portion of the applause and admiration which is lying about loose for general circulation in society, all contributed to her popularity. As I approached the circle they were discussing with great animation the preliminaries of a match game of croquet that was proposed to be played at Clairmont to-day.

"Oh, here comes Mr. Henderson! let's ask him," she said, as I approached the circle.

"Don't you think it will be a nice thing?" she said. "Mr. Sydney has arranged that after playing the first games as a trial the four best players shall be elected to play a match game, two on each side."

"I think it will vary the usual monotony of croquet," said I.

"Hear him," she said, gaily, "talk of the usual monotony of croquet! For my part I think there is a constant variety to it, no two games are ever alike."

"To me," I said, "it seems that after a certain amount of practice the result is likely to be the same thing, game after game."

"Girls," she said, "I perceive that Mr. Henderson is used to carrying all before him. He is probably a champion player who will walk through all the wickets as a matter of course."

"Not at all," I said. "On the contrary I shouldn't wonder if I should 'booby' hopelessly at the very first wicket."

"And none the worse for that," said Sydney. "I've boobied three times running, in the first of a game, and yet beaten; it gets one's blood up, and one *will* beat."

"For my part," said Miss Alice, "the more my blood is up the less I can do; if I get excited I lose my aim, my hand trembles, and I miss the very simplest move."

"I think there is nothing varies so much as one's luck in croquet," said Eva. "Sometimes for weeks together I am sure to hit every aim and to carry every wicket, and then all of a sudden, without rhyme or reason, I make the most absurd failures, and generally when I pique myself on success."

"I think, Miss Eva, I remember you as the best player in Newport last Summer," said Mr. Sydney.

"And likely as not I shall fail ingloriously to-day," said she.

"Well, we shall all have a time for bringing our hands in," said Mr. Sydney. "I have arranged four croquet grounds, and the fifth one is laid out for the trial game with longer intervals and special difficulties in the arrangement, to make it as exciting as possible. The victorious side is to have a prize."

"Oh, how splendid! What is the prize to be?" was the general exclamation.

"Behold, then!" said Mr. Sydney, drawing from his pocket a velvet case which when opened displayed a tiny croquet mallet wrought in gold and set as a lady's pin. Depending from it by four gold chains were four little balls of emerald, ruby, amethyst, and topaz.

"How perfectly lovely! how divine! how beautiful!" were the sounds that arose from the brilliant little circle that were in a moment precipitated upon the treasure.

"You will really set them all by the ears, Mr. Sydney," said Mrs. Van Arsdel. "Croquet of itself is exciting enough; one is apt to lose one's temper."

"You ought to see mamma and Mrs. Van Duzen and Aunt Maria play," said Eva, "if you want to see an edifying game, it's too funny. They are all so polite and so dreadfully courtly and grieved to do anything disagreeable to each other, and you know croquet is such a perfectly selfish, savage, unchristian game; so when poor Mrs. Van Duzen is told that she ought to croquet mamma's ball away from the wicket, the dear lady is quite ready to cry, and declares that it would be such a pity to disappoint her, that she croquets her through her wicket, and looks round apologizing for her virtues with such a pitiful face! 'Indeed, my dear, I couldn't help it!'"

"Well," said Mrs. Van Arsdel, "I really think it is too bad when a poor body has been battering and laboring at a difficult wicket to be croqueted back a dozen times."

"It's meant for the culture of Christian patience, mamma," said Eva. "Croquet is the game of life, you see."

"Certainly," said Mr. Sydney, rubbing his hands, "and it teaches you just how to manage, use your friends to help yourself along, and then croquet them into good positions; use your enemies as long as you want them, and then send them to ——."

"The devil," said Jim Fellows, who never hesitated to fill up an emphatic blank in the conversation.

"I didn't say that," said Mr. Sydney.

"But you meant it, all the same; and that's the long and the short of the philosophy of the game of life," said Jim.

"And" said I, "one may read all sorts of life-histories in the game. Some go on with a steady aim and true stroke, and make wickets, and hit balls, yet are croqueted back ingloriously or hopelessly wired and lose the game, while others blunder advantageously and are croqueted along by skillful partners into all the best places."

"There are few of us girls that make our own wickets in life," said Eva. "We are all croqueted along by papas and mammas."

"And many a man is croqueted along by a smart wife," said Sydney.

"But more women by smart husbands," said Mrs. Van Arsdel.

On that there was a general exclamation, and the conversation forthwith whisked into one of those animated whirlwinds that always arise when the comparative merits of the sexes are moved. There was a flutter of ribbons and a rustle of fans and a laughing cross-fire of sharp sayings, till the whole was broken up by the announcement that we were drawing near the landing.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE MATCH GAME.

THE lawn at Clairmont made a brilliant spectacle, all laid out with different croquet sets. The turf was like velvet, and adjoining every ground was a pretty tent, with seats and every commodious provision for repairing at once any temporary derangement of the feminine toilet. The fluttering of gay flags and pennons from these various tents gave an airy and breezy look to the scene, and immediately we formed ourselves into sets, and the games began. It had been arranged that the preliminary playing should take place immediately, and the match game be reserved till after lunch. The various fancy costumes of the players, lit up by the bright sunshine, and contrasted with the emerald green of the lawn, formed a brilliant and animated picture, watched with interest by groups of non-combatants from rustic seats under the trees. Of course everybody was a little nervous in the trial games, and there was the usual amount of ill luck, and of "Ohs and Ahs" of success or failure. I made myself a "booby" twice, in that unaccountable way that seems like fatality. Then suddenly, favored of the fates, made two wickets at once, seized an antagonist's ball, and went with it at one heat through the side wicket, the middle and other side wicket up to the stake and down again, through the middle wicket to the stake again, and then struck back a glorious rover to join my partner. It was one of those prodigiously lucky runs, when one's ball goes exactly where it is intended, and stops exactly in the right place, and though it was mostly owing to good luck, with the usual prestige of success I was covered with glory and congratulations, and my partner, Miss Sophie Elmore, herself a champion at croquet, was pleased to express most unbounded admiration, especially as our side came out decidedly victorious.

Miss Sophie, a neat little vigorous brunette, in a ravishing fancy croquet suit, entered into the game with all that whole-hearted ardor which makes women such terrible combatants.

"Oh, I *do* hope that we shall be in at that final match-game!" she said, with a charming abandon of manner. "I should so like to beat Eva Van Arsdel. Those Van Arsdels always expect to carry all before them, and it rather provokes me, I confess. Now, with you to help me, Mr. Henderson, I am sure we could beat."

"Don't put too much faith in my accidental run of luck," I said; "'one swallow does not make a summer.'"

"Oh, I'm quite sure by the way you managed your game that it wasn't luck. But you see I want to try with Eva Van Arsdel again, for she and I were held to be the best players at Newport last summer, and she beat in the last 'rubber' we played. It was so provoking—just one slip of the mallet that ruined me! You know, sometimes, how your mallet will turn in your hands. She made just such a slip and took the stroke over again. Now that is what I never will do, you see," &c., &c.

In short, I could see that for pretty Miss Sophie, at present, croquet was, it all intents and purposes, the whole game of life, that every spangle and every hair-pin about her was vital with excitement to win.

After lunch came the ballot for the combatants who were to play the deciding game, and the parties elected were: Miss Sophie Elmore, Miss Eva Van Arsdel, Mr. Sydney, and myself.

"Miss Van Arsdel," said Mr. Sydney, "you must be my captain. After the feats that you and Mr. Henderson have been performing it would be impossible to allow you both on one side."

"I think just as likely as not you will be worsted for your pains," said Eva. "I know Sophie of old for a terrible antagonist, and when she pulls on her croquet-gloves like that, it means war to the knife, and no quarter. So, my dear, begin the tournament."

The wickets were arranged at extra distances upon this trial ground, and it was hardly prudent to attempt making two wickets at once, but Miss Sophie played in the adventurous style, and sent her ball with a vigorous tap not only through both the first wickets, but so far ahead that it was entangled in the wires of the middle wicket, in a way that made it impossible to give it a fair stroke.

' Now, how vexatious!" she cried.

"I have two extra strokes for my two wickets, but I shall make nothing by it." In fact, Miss Sophie, with two nervous hits, succeeded only in placing her ball exactly where with fair luck the next player must be sure to get it.

Eva now came through the two first wickets, one at a time, and with a well-directed tap took possession of Miss Sophie, who groaned audibly, "Oh, now she's got me! well, there's no saying now where she'll stop."

In fact, Miss Eva performed very skillfully the rôle of the "cat who doth play, and after—slay." She was perfect mistress of the tactics of split-shots, which sent her antagonist's ball one side the wicket and hers the other, and all the other mysteries of the craft, and she used them well, till she had been up and hit the stake and come down to the middle wicket, when her luck failed.

Then came my turn, and I came through the first two wickets, struck her ball and used it for the next two wickets, till I came near my partner, when with a prosperous split-shot I sent her off to distant regions, struck my partner's ball, put it through its wicket, and came and stationed myself within its reach for future use.

Then came Mr. Sydney with a vigorous succession of hits, and knocked us apart; sent one to one side of the ground, and one to the other, and went gallantly up to his partner.

By this time our blood was thoroughly up, and the game became, as Eva prophesied, "war to the knife." Mohawk Indians could not have been more merciless in purposes of utter mischief to each other than we, and for a while it seemed as if nothing was done but to attack each other's balls, and send them as far as possible to the uttermost part of the grounds. As each had about equal skill in making long shots the re-union, however, was constantly effected, and thus each in turn was beaten back from the wickets, till it seemed for a while that the game would make no progress.

At last, however, one slip of our antagonists threw the power into our hands, and Miss Sophie used it to take herself and me up through three wickets to the stake, and thence down again till the intricate middle wicket stopped our course.

A burst of cheering greeted her success, and the dark little lady seemed to glow like a coal of fire. I wasn't sure that sparks did not snap from her eyes as she ended her performance with a croquet that sent Eva's ball spinning to the most inaccessible distance.

A well-pointed shot from Wat Sydney again turned the tide of battle, and routed the victors, while he went to the rescue of the banished princess, and took her back to position.

Every turn of the tide, and every good shot was hailed with cheers, and the excitement became intense. There were points in the battle as hard to carry as the Malakoff, and we did nothing but fight, without advancing a step. It seemed for a while that none of us would ever so far get the advantage of another as to pass that downward middle wicket. Every successive step was won by battles. The ladies were so excited that they seemed two flames of fire. Every nerve in them was alive, and we men felt ourselves only clumsy instruments of their enkindled ardor. We were ordered about, commanded, rebuked, encouraged, and cheered on to the fray with a pungency and vigor of decision that made us quite secondary characters in the scene. At last a fortunate stroke gave Miss Sophie the command of the game, and she dashed through the middle wicket, sent Eva's ball to farthest regions up, and Mr. Sydney's down to the stake, took mine with her in her victorious race through wicket after wicket, quite through to the stake, and then leaving me for a moment she croqueted Sydney's ball against the stake, and put it out. A general cheer and shouts of "victory" arose.

"We've got it! We're quite sure to go out the next move!" she said, in triumph, as she left her ball by my side. "She never can hit at that distance."

"I can try, though," said Eva, walking across the ground, and taking her place by her ball, pale and resolved, with a concentrated calmness. She sighted the balls deliberately, poised her mallet, took aim, and gave a well-considered stroke. Like a straight-aimed arrow the ball flew across the green, through the final wicket, and struck Sophie's ball!

A general cheering arose, and the victorious markswoman walked deliberately down to finish her work. One stroke put Sophie out of the combat, the next struck upon me and then from me up to the head of the two last wickets that yet remained to be made. She came through these with one straight stroke, and hit me again.

"Now for it," she said, setting her red-booted foot firmly on the ball, and with one virulent tap, away flew my ball to the other end of the ground, while almost immediately hers hit the stake and the victory was won.

A general shout, and three cheers, and all the spectators started from their seats like a troop of gay tropical birds, and came flocking around the victors.

I knelt down, and laid my mallet at her feet. "Beautiful princess!" said I, "behold your enemies, conquered, await your sentence."

"Arise, Sir Knight," she said, laughing; "I sentence you to write a ballad describing this battle. Come, Sophie," she added, turning gaily to the brunette, "let's shake hands on it. You shall have your revenge of me at Newport this summer," and the two rival fair ones shook hands in all apparent amity.

Wat Sydney now advancing presented the prize with a gallant bow, and Eva accepted it graciously, and fastened the blue scarf that floated over her shoulder with it, and then the whole party adjourned to another portion of the lawn, which had been arranged for dancing; the music struck up and soon we were all joining in the dance with a general hilarity.

And so ended the day at Clairmont, and we came home under a broad full moon, to the sound of music on the waters.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

[Eva Van Arsdel to Isabel Convers.]

MY DEAREST BELLE:—Since I last wrote you wondrous things have taken place, and of course I must keep you *au courant.*

In the first place Mr. Sydney came back to our horizon like a comet in a blaze of glory. The first harbinger of his return was not himself in propriâ, but *cards* for a croquet fête up at Clairmont got up with the last degree of elegance.

Mr. Sydney, it appears, understands the effect of a gilded frame to set off a picture, and so resolved to manifest himself to us in all his surroundings at Clairmont.

The party was to be very select and recherché, and of course everybody was just wild to go, and the Elmores in particular were on the *qui vive* to know if we had invitations before them. Sophia Elmore called down for nothing but to see. We had all the satisfaction there was to be got in showing her our cards and letting her know that they had come two days sooner than theirs. Aunt Maria contrived to give them to understand that Mr. Sydney gave the entertainment mostly on my account, which I think was assuming quite too much in the case. I am positively tired of these mean little rivalries and these races that are run between families.

It is thought that Sophia Elmore is quite fascinated by Mr. Sydney. Sophia is a nice, spirited girl, with a good, generous heart as I believe, and it's a thousand pities she shouldn't have him if she cares for him.

But, to my story. You may imagine the fuss at Tullegig's. Of course we belong to the class who live in the enjoyment of "nothing to wear," and the first result of a projected entertainment is to throw us all on our knees before Tullegig, who queens it over us accordingly.

I was just dying to find out if *a certain person* was to be there. Of late our intercourse has been so very stately and diplomatic that it really becomes exciting. He has avoided every appearance of intimacy, every approach to our old confidential standing, and yet apparently for the life of him cannot keep from taking views of me at safe distance; so, as I said, it was something to see if he would be there.

As to Clairmont, I think in the course of my life I have seen fine grounds, fine houses, fine furniture, and fine fêtes before. Nevertheless I must do Sydney the justice to say that he gave a most charming and beautiful entertainment, where everything was just as lovely as could be. We went up on a splendid boat to the sound of music. We had a magnificent lunch under the trees, and there were arrangements for four games to go on at once, which made a gay and animated tableau. All the girls wore the prettiest costumes you can imagine, each one seeming prettier than the other; and when they were all moving about in the game it made a bright, cheerful effect. Mr. Henderson was there and distinguished himself to such a degree that he was appointed one of the four who were to play a match-game, in conclusion, for a prize. Curiously enough he played with Sophia against Sydney and myself. How we did fight! Sophie is one of those girls that feel everything to the tips of their fingers, and I am another, and if we didn't make those men bestir themselves! I fancy they found women rulers were of a kind to keep men pretty busy.

I can imagine the excitement we women would make of an election if we should ever get into politics. Would we not croquet our adversaries' balls, and make stunning split-shots in parties, and wire ourselves artfully behind wickets, and do all sorts of perplexing things? I confess if the excitement should get to be half as great as in playing croquet, I should tremble to think of it.

Well, it was some excitement at all events to play against each other, he and I. Didn't I seek out his ball, didn't I pursue it, beat it back from wickets, come on it with most surprising and unexpected shots? Sophie fought with desperation on the other side, and at last they seemed to have carried the day, there was but one stroke wanting to put them out; they had killed Sydney at the stake and banished me to the farthest extremity of the ground. Mamma always said I had the genius for emergencies, and if you'll believe me I struck quite across the ground and hit Sophie's ball and sent it out, and then I took *his* back to make my two last wickets with, and finally with an imposing *coup de théâtre* I croqueted him to the other end of the ground, and went out amid thunders of applause. He took it with great presence of mind, knelt down and laid the mallet handsomely at my feet, and professed to deliver himself captive, and I imposed it on him as a task to write a ballad descriptive of the encounter. So he was shut up for about half an hour in the library, and came out with a very fine and funny ballad in Chevy Chase measure describing our exploits, which was read under the trees, and cheered and encored in the liveliest manner possible.

On the whole, Mr. Henderson may be said to have had quite a society success yesterday, as I heard him very much admired, and the Elmores overwhelmed him with pressing invitations to call, to come to their soirées, etc., etc You see these Elmores have everything money can buy, and so they are distracted to be literary, or at least to have literary people in their train, and they have always been wanting to get Henderson and Jim Fellows to their receptions. So I heard Mrs. Elmore overwhelming him with compliments on his poem in a way that quite amused me, for I knew enough of him to know exactly how all this seemed to him. He is of all persons one of the most difficult to flatter, and has the keenest sense of the ridiculous; and Mrs. Elmore's style is as if one should empty a bushel basket of peaches or grapes on your head instead of passing the fruit dish.

But I am so busy traducing my neighbors that I forgot to say I won the croquet prize, which was duly presented. It was a gold croquet mallet set as a pin with four balls of emerald, amethyst, ruby, and topaz depending from it. It had quite an Etruscan effect and was very pretty, but when I saw how much Sophia really took the defeat to heart, my soul was moved for her and I made a peace-offering by getting her to accept it. It was not easy at first, but I made a point of it and insisted upon it with all my logic, telling her that in point of skill she had really won the game, that my last stroke was only a lucky accident, and you know I can generally talk people into almost anything I set my heart on, and so as Sophie was flattered by my estimate of her skill and as the bauble is a pretty one, I prevailed on her to take it. I am tired and sick of this fuss between the Elmores and us, and don't mean to have more of it, for Sophie really is a nice girl, and not a bit more spoiled than any of the rest of us, notwithstanding all the nonsense of her family, and she and I have agreed to be fast friends for the future, whatever may come.

I had one other motive in this move. I never have accepted jewelry from Sydney, and I was quite willing to be rid of this. If I could only croquet his heart down to Sophie to use, it might be a nice thing. I fancy she would like it.

I managed my cards quite adroitly all day to avoid a tête-à-tête interview with Sydney. I was careful always to be in the center of a group of two or three, and when he asked me to walk through the conservatories with him I said, "Come, Amy and Jane," and took them along.

As to *somebody* else, *he* made no attempt of the kind, though I could see that he *saw* me wherever I went. Do these creatures suppose we don't see their eyes, and fancy that they conceal their feelings? I am perfectly certain that whatever the matter is, he thinks as much of me as ever he did.

Well, it was moonlight and music all the way home, the band playing the most heart-breaking, entrancing harmonies from Beethoven and melodies from Schubert, and then Wat Sydney annoyed me beyond measure by keeping up a distracting chit-chat when I wanted to be quiet and listen. He cares nothing for music, and people who don't are like flies, they have no mercy and never will leave you a quiet moment. The *other one* went off and sat by himself, gazed at the moon and heard the music all in the most proper and romantic style, and looked like a handsome tenor at an opera.

* * * * * * *

So far, my dear, the history of our affairs. But something more surprising than ever you heard has just happened, and I must hasten to jot it down.

Yesterday afternoon, being worried and wearied with the day before, I left your letter, as you see, and teased Ida to go out driving with me in the Park. She had promised Effie St. Clere to sketch some patterns of arbors and garden seats that are there, for her new place at Fern Valley, and I had resolved on a lonely ramble to clear my heart and brain.

Moreover, the last time I was there I saw from one of the bridges a very pretty cascade falling into a charming little wooded lake in the distance. I resolved to go in search of this same cascade which is deep in a shady labyrinth of paths.

Well, it was a most lovely perfect day, and we left our carriage at the terrace and started off for our ramble, Ida with her sketch-book in hand. She was very soon hard at work at a rustic summer-house, while I plunged into a woody tangle of paths guided only by the distant sound of the cascades. It was toward evening and the paths seemed quite solitary, for I met not a creature. I might really have thought I was among the ferns and white birches up in Conway, or anywhere in the mountains, it was so perfectly mossy and wild and solitary. A flock of wild geese seemed to be making an odd sort of outlandish noise, far in a deep, dark tangle of bushes, and it appeared to me to produce the impression of utter solitude more than anything else. Evidently it was a sort of wild lair seldom invaded. I still heard the noise of the cascade through a thicket of leaves, but could not get a sight of it. Sometimes it seemed near and sometimes far off, but at last I thought I hit upon a winding path that seemed to promise to take me to it. It wound round a declivity, and I could tell by the sound I was approaching the water. I was quite animated, and ran forward till a sudden turn brought me to the head of the cascade where there was a railing and one seat, and as I came running down I saw suddenly a man with a book in his hand sitting on this seat, and it was Mr. Henderson.

He rose up when he saw me and looked pale, but an expression of perfectly rapturous delight passed over his face as I checked myself astonished.

"Miss Van Arsdel!" he said. "To what happy fate do I owe this good fortune!"

I recovered myself and said that "I was not aware of any *particular* good fortune in the case."

"Not to *you*, perhaps," he said, "but to *me*. I have seen nothing of you for so long," he added, rather piteously.

"There has been nothing that I am aware of to prevent your seeing me," I said. "If Mr. Henderson chooses to make himself strange to his friends it is his own affair." He looked confused and murmured something about "many engagements and business"

"Mr. Henderson, you will excuse me," said I, resolved not to have this sort of thing go on any longer. "You have always been treated at our house as an intimate and valued friend; of late you seem to prefer to act like a ceremonious stranger."

"Indeed, you mistake me entirely, Miss Van Arsdel," he said, eagerly. "You *must* know my feelings; you *must* appreciate my reasons; you see why I cannot and ought not."

"I am quite in the dark as to both," I said. "I cannot see any reason why we should not be on the old footing, I am sure. You have acted of late as if you were afraid to meet me; it is all perfectly unaccountable to me. Why should you do so? What reason can there be?"

"Because," he said, with a sort of desperation, "because I *love* you, Miss Van Arsdel. Because I always shall love you too well to associate with you as the wife or betrothed bride of another man."

"There is no occasion you should, Mr. Henderson. I am not, so far as I understand, either wife or betrothed to any man," I said.

He looked perfectly thunderstruck.

"Yet I heard it from the best authority."

"From what authority?" said I, "for I deny it."

"Your mother."

"My mother?" I was thunderstruck in my turn; here it was, to be sure. Poor mamma! I saw through the whole mystery.

"Your mother told me," he went on, "that there was a tacit engagement which was to be declared on Mr. Sydney's return, and cautioned me against an undue intimacy."

"My mother," I said, "has done her utmost to persuade me to this engagement. I refused Mr. Sydney out and out in the beginning. She persuaded me to allow him to continue his attentions in hope of changing my mind, but it never has changed."

He grew agitated and spoke very quickly.

"Oh, tell me, Miss Van Arsdel, if *I* may hope for success in making the same effort?"

"I shouldn't be surprised if you might," said I.

There followed a sort of electric flash and a confusion of wild words after this—really, my dear, I cannot remember half what he said—only the next I knew, somehow, we were walking arm in arm together.

What a talk we had, and what a walk up and down those tangled alleys! going over everything and explaining everything. It was a bright long twilight, and the great silver moon rose upon us while yet we were talking. After a while I heard Ida calling up and down the paths for me. She came up and met us with her sketch-book under her arm.

"Ida, we're engaged, Harry and I," I said.

"So I thought," she said, looking at us kindly and stretching out both hands.

I took one and he the other.

"Do you think I have any chance with your parents?" asked Harry.

"I think," said Ida, "that you will find trouble at first, but you may rely on Eva, she will never change; but we must go home."

"Yes," said I, "it would not do to introduce the matter by getting up a domestic alarm and sending a party to drag the lake for us; we must drive home in a peaceable, orderly manner," and so, it being agreed among us that I should try my diplomatic powers on mamma first, and Harry should speak to papa afterward, we drove home.

Well, now, Belle, it is all over—the mystery I mean; and the struggle with the powers, that bids to begin. How odd it is that marriage, which is a thing of all others most personal and individual, is a thing where all your friends want you to act to please them!

Mamma probably in her day felt toward papa just as I feel, but I am sure she will be drowned in despair that I cannot see Wat Sydney with her eyes, and that I do choose to see Harry with mine. But it isn't mamma that is to live with him, it is *I*; it is my fearful venture for life, not hers. I am to give the right to have and to hold *me* till life's end. When I think of that I wonder I am not afraid to risk it with any man, but with him I am not. I know him so intimately and trust him so entirely.

What a laugh I gave him last night, telling him how foolishly he had acted; he likes to have me take him off, and seemed perfectly astonished that I had had the perspicacity to read his feelings. These men, my dear, have a kind of innocent stupidity in matters of this kind that is refreshing!

Well, if I am not mistaken, there was one blissful individual sent home in New York last night, notwithstanding the terrors of the "*stern parents*," that are yet to be encountered

How I do chatter on! Well, my dear Belle, you see I have kept my word. I always told you that I would let you know when I was engaged, the very first of any one, and now here it is. You may make the most of it and tell whom you please, for I shall never change. I am as firm as Ben Lomond.

Ever your loving Eva.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DOMESTIC CONSULTATIONS.

ON the afternoon after the croquet party Aunt Maria Wouvermans and Mrs. Van Arsdel, withdrawn to the most confidential recess of the house, held mysterious council.

"Well, Nelly," said Aunt Maria, "how did you think things looked yesterday?"

"I thought a crisis was impending, but after all nothing came. But you see, Maria," said Mrs. Van Arsdel, "*that* girl! she is the most peculiar creature. She wouldn't give him the least chance; she just held herself away from him. Two or three times I tried to arrange that they should be alone together, but she wouldn't. She would keep Susan and Jane Seaton at her elbow as if they had been glued to her."

"It was so provoking," said Aunt Maria, "because all the Elmores were there watching and whispering. Those Elmores are in such an elated state on account of the wedding in their family. You'd really think it was a royal marriage at the very least; and they whisper about and talk as if we had been trying to catch Sydney and couldn't; that's what provokes me! they were all on tiptoe watching every turn, and I did long to be able to come down on them with an announcement! What ails Eva? Of course she must mean to have him; no girl at her age would be fool enough to refuse such an offer; you see she's three-and-twenty."

"Well, if you'll believe me, Eva actually went and gave that croquet pin Sydney gave her to Sophie Elmore! I overheard her urging it on her, and he overheard it too, and I know he didn't like it; it was so very marked a thing, you see!"

"Eva gave that pin to Sophie Elmore! The girl is crazy. She is too provoking for anything! I can't think what it is, Nelly, makes your girls so singular."

Mrs. Wouvermans, it will appear, was one of that very common class of good people who improve every opportunity to show how very senseless their neighbors are compared with themselves. The sole and only reason, as might be gathered from her remarks, why anything disagreeable happened to anybody, was because they did not do, or had not done just as she should have done in their circumstances.

Now Mrs. Van Arsdel, though conceding in general that sister Maria was stronger and brighter than herself, was somewhat rebellious under the process of having it insisted in detail that every unfortunate turn of affairs was her fault, and so she answered with some spirit:

"I don't see that my girls are any more singular than other people's. Very few mothers have brought up nicer girls than mine. Everybody says so."

"And I say, Nelly, they are peculiar," insisted Mrs. Wouvermans. "There's Ida going off at her tangent! and Miss Eva! Well! one thing, it isn't *my* fault. I've done the very best I could in instructing them! It must come from the Van Arsdel side of the house. I'm sure in *our* family girls never made so much trouble. We all grew up sensible, and took the very best offer we had, and were married and went about our duties without any fuss. Though of course we never had a chance like this."

"Now, I shouldn't wonder in the least," said Mrs. Van Arsdel, "if Sydney should fly off to Sophie Elmore. It's evident that she is perfectly infatuated with him! and you know men's hearts are caught on the rebound very often."

"Oh, yes," said Aunt Maria, "I shouldn't wonder, just as Jerold Macy flew off to Blanche Sinclair, when Edith Enderly coquetted so with him. He never would have gone to Blanche in the world if Edith had not thrown him off. Edith was sorry enough afterward when it was too late to help it."

"I declare," said Mrs. Van Arsdel, "one never knows what trouble is till one has girls at the marrying age!"

"It's all your own fault," said Aunt Maria, "you indulge them too much. For my part," she continued, "I like the French way of arranging these things. It ought not to be left to the choice of a young silly girl. The parents ought to arrange for her, and then the thing is settled without any trouble. Of course people of experience in mature life can choose better for a girl than she can choose for herself! Our girls in America have too much liberty. If I had daughters to bring up I should bring them up so that they would never think of disputing what I told them."

"So you are always saying, Maria," said Mrs. Van Arsdel, "it's quite safe to say what you'll do when you haven't any, but it's very provoking to me. I only wish you had Ida and Eva to manage."

"I only wish I had!" said Aunt Maria. "I should have had them both well married by this time. There shouldn't be any of this kind of nonsense that you allow. I'd set down my foot. I *wouldn't* have it. My daughters *should* obey me. You let them make a perfect nose-of-wax of you. They treat you in any way they please."

"You always think so much of yourself, Maria, and whatever happens you turn round and blame me. I wish to mercy you'd *had* children and then you'd see! People who haven't are always delighted with themselves and always criticising people who have. If you had a family of children to manage they'd soon bring you down."

"Well, Nelly, you'll just see, you'll have a lot of old maids on your hands, that's all," said Aunt Maria. "Ida is a gone case now, and Eva is on the certain road. Girls that are so difficult and romantic and can't tell their own mind are sure to make old maids at last. There was Ellen Gilliflower, and Jane Seabright, they might both have had houses and horses and carriages of their own if they had taken offers when they could get them."

"You know poor Jane lost her lover."

"To be sure. Well, he was dead, wasn't he? and she couldn't marry him, but was that any reason why she never should marry anybody? There was John Smithson would have put her at the head of one of the best establishments about New York, and she might have had her own coupé and horses just as Mrs. Smithson does now. It's all this ridiculous idea about loving. Why, girls *can* love anybody they've a mind to, and if I had a daughter she *should*."

"Oh! I don't know, Maria," said Mrs. Van Arsdel. "I think it is a pretty serious thing to force a daughter's affections."

"Fiddlestick upon affections, Nelly; don't you begin to talk. It makes me perfectly sick to hear the twaddle about it. People in good circumstances always like each other well enough, and any girl can get along with any man that puts her in a good position and takes good care of her. If Ida had been *made* to marry a good man when she first came out of school she never would have gone off at all these tangents, and she'd have been a contented woman, and so would Eva. She ought to be *made* to marry Wat Sydney; it is a tempting of Providence to let the thing drag on so. Now, if Sydney was like Sim Rivington, I wouldn't say a word. I think Polly's conduct is perfectly abominable, and if Sim goes on getting drunk and raises a hell upon earth at home Polly may just have herself to thank for it, for she was told all about him. She did it with her eyes open, but Eva's case is different."

At this moment the door-bell rang, and the waiter brought in a letter on a silver salver. Both ladies pounced upon it, and Aunt Maria saying, "It's to you, from Sydney," eagerly broke it open and began reading.

"I should think, sister," said Mrs. Van Arsdel, in an injured tone, "*I* might be allowed the first reading of my own letters."

"Oh, pshaw, don't be so peevish," said Aunt Maria, pushing it petulantly toward her. "If you don't want me to take any interest in your affairs I'm sure I don't see why

I should. I'll go, and you may manage them yourself."

"But, Maria," said poor Mrs. Van Arsdel, apologetically, "one naturally has the wish to see one's own letters first."

"Well, mercy on us, child, don't be in a passion about it," said Aunt Maria, "you've got your letter, haven't you? Do read it, and you'll see it's just as I thought. That girl has offended him with her airs and graces, and he is just on the point of giving her up."

"But, you see, he says that he still desires to propose to her," said Mrs. Van Arsdel, reading, "only that as her manner to him is so marked he does not wish to expose himself to another refusal."

"Well," said Aunt Maria, "now you see, Nelly, after all, that letter leaves the game in Eva's own hands. If now she will behave herself and let you invite him to an interview and treat him properly, it can all be settled. The letter, in fact, amounts to a proposal in form. Now, Nelly, that girl *must* be made to behave herself. I wish I could put some pluck into you; you must be decided with her."

"It's of no use, sister, you don't know Eva. She's an easy child to be coaxed, but she has a terrible will of her own. The only way to manage her is through her affections. I can't bear to cross her, for she always was a good child."

"Well, then, tell her just how critical the state of the family is. She may have it in her power to save her father from failure. It may be just life or death with us all. Put it to her strongly. It would be a pretty thing, indeed, if instead of being mistress of Clairmont and that place at Newport, we should all be driven to take second-rate houses and live like nobodies, just for her foolish fancies. You ought to frighten her, Nelly. Set it out strongly. Appeal to her affections."

"Well, I shall do my best," said Mrs. Van Arsdel.

"Where is she? let *me* talk with her," said Aunt Maria.

"She and Ida are both gone driving in the Park this afternoon, but after all, sister, I think *I* had best manage it. I think I understand Eva better than you do. She would do more for me than for anybody, I think, for the child is very affectionate."

"There can't be anybody else in the case, can there?" said Aunt Maria. "I began to think it rather imprudent to have that Henderson round so much, but of late he seems to have stopped coming."

"I flatter myself, I managed *him*," said Mrs. Van Arsdel, with complacency. "I gave him a little motherly admonition that had a wonderful effect. After all it was a duty I owed to him, poor youth! Eva is wonderfully fascinating, and I could see he was getting too much interested in her. I have a regard for him. He is a nice fellow."

"I intended to have him take Ida," said Aunt Maria. "That would have been the proper thing to do."

"Well, Maria, I should think you might have found out by this time that everybody in the world isn't going to walk in the ways you mark out for them."

"It would be better for them if they would," said Aunt Maria. "If I had had the bringing up of your children from the beginning, Nelly, and you had never interfered, I think you would have seen results that you never will see now. It seems mysterious that Providence shouldn't send children to those best fitted to bring them up. Well, you must do the best you can. What time is it? Dear me, it is almost dinner time and I have a new table girl to-day. I expect she'll have everything topsy-turvey. I'll call round to-morrow to see how things come on."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WEALTH *versus* LOVE.

EVA VAN ARSDEL was seated in her apartment in all that tremulous flush of happiness and hope, that confusion of feeling, which a young girl experiences when she thinks that the great crisis of her life has been past, and her destiny happily decided.

"Yes, yes," she said to herself, "I like him, I like him; and I am going to like him, no matter what mamma, or Aunt Maria, or all the world say. I'll stand by him through life and death."

At this moment her mother came into the room.

"Dear me! Eva, child, not gone to bed yet! Why, what's the matter? how flushed your cheeks are! Why, you look really feverish."

"Do I?" said Eva, hardly knowing what she was saying. "Well, I suppose that is becoming, at any rate."

"Aren't you well?" said her mother. "Does your head ache?"

"Well? certainly, nicely; never better, mamma dear," said Eva, caressingly, coming and seating herself on her mother's knee, and putting her arm around her neck—"never better, mother."

"Well, Eva, then I am glad of it. I just wanted a few minutes alone with you to-night. I have got something to tell you"—and she drew a letter from her pocket. "Here's this letter from Mr. Sydney; I want to read you something from it."

"Oh dear, mamma! what's the use? Don't you think it rather stupid, reading letters?"

"My dear child, Mr. Sydney is such a *good* man, and so devoted to you."

"I haven't the least objection, mamma, to his being a good man. Long may he be so. But as to his being devoted to me, I am sorry for it."

"At least, Eva, just read this letter—there's a dear; and I am sure you must see how like a gentleman he writes."

Eva took the letter from her mother's hand, and ran it over hurriedly.

"All no use, mamma, dear," she said, when she had done. "It won't hurt him. He'll get over this just as people do with the chicken-pox. The fact is, mamma, Mr. Sydney is a man that can't bear to be balked in anything that he has once undertaken to do. It is not that he loves me so very dreadfully, but he has set out to have me. If he could have got me, ten to one he would have tired of me before now. You know he said that he never cared anything about a girl that he knew he could have. It is simply and only because I have kept myself out of his way and been hard to get that he wants me. If he once had me for a wife. I should be all well enough, but I should be *got*, and he'd be off after the next thing he could not get. That's just his nature, mamma."

"But, Eva dear, such a *fine* man as he is."

"I do not see that he is so very fine."

"But. Eva, only look at the young men that girls marry! Why, there's that young Rivington; he's drunk three nights in a week, so they tell me. And there are worse stories than that about him. He has been bad in every kind of way that a man could be bad. And yet, Polly Elmore is perfectly crazy with delight to have her daughter get him. And here's Wat Sydney, who, everybody says, is always perfectly sober and correct."

"Well, mamma dear, if it is only a sober, correct man that you want me to have, there's that Mr. Henderson, just as sober and correct, and a great deal more cultivated and agreeable."

"How absurd of you, my daughter! Mr. Henderson has not anything to support a wife on. He is a good moral young man, I admit, and agreeable, and has talent and all that; but, my dear Eva, you are not fitted to contend with poverty. You must marry a man that can support you in the position that you have always been in."

"Whether I love him or not, mamma?"

"My dear Eva, you would, of course, love your husband. A man that is able to take care of you and get you everything that you want—give you every wish of your heart—you would love of course."

"Well, mamma, I have got a man that does exactly that for me, now," said Eva, "and I don't need another. That's just what papa does for me. And now, when I marry, I want a companion that suits me. I have got now all the bracelets, and jewelry, and finger rings that I can think of; and if I wanted forty more I could tease them out of papa any day, or kiss them out of him. Pa always gets me everything I want; so I don't see what I want of Mr. Sydney."

"Well, now, my dear Eva, I must speak to you seriously. You are old enough now not to be talked to like a child. The fact is, my darling, there is nothing so insecure as our life here. Your father, my love, is reported to be a great deal richer than he is. Of course we have to keep up the idea, because it helps his business. But the last two or three years he has met with terrible losses, and I have seen him sometimes so nervous about our family expenditures that, really, there was no comfort in life. But, then, we had this match in view. We supposed, of course, that it was coming off. And such a splendid settlement on you would help the family every way. Mr. Sydney is a very generous man; and the use of his capital, the credit that the marriage would give to your father in business circles, would be immense. And then, my child, just think of the establishment you would have! Why, there is not such an establishment in the country as his place on the North River! You saw it yesterday. What could you ask more? And there is that villa at Newport. You might be there in the Summer, and have all your sisters there. And he is a man of the most splendid taste as to equipages and furniture, and everything of that sort. And, as I said before, he is a good man."

"But, mamma, mamma, it will never do. Not if he had the East and West Indies. All that can't buy your little Eva. Tell me, now, mamma dear, was pa a rich man when you married him—I mean when you fell in love with him?"

"Well, no, dear, not very; though people always said that he was a man that would rise."

"But you didn't begin in a house like this, mamma. You began at the beginning and helped him up, didn't you?"

"Well, yes, dear, we did begin in a quiet way; and I had to live pretty carefully the first years of my life; and worked hard, and know all about it; and I want to save you from going through the same that I did."

"May be if you did I should not turn out as you are now. But really, mother, if pa is embarrassed, why do we live so? Why don't we economize? I am sure I am willing to."

"Oh, darling! we mustn't. We mustn't make any change; because, if the idea should once get running that there is any difficulty about money, everybody would be down on your father. We have to keep everything going, and everything up, or else things would go abroad that would injure his credit; and he could not get money for his operations. He is engaged in great operations now that will bring in millions if they succeed."

"And if they don't succeed," said Eva, "then I suppose that we shall lose millions—is that it?"

"Well, dear, it is just as I tell you, we rich people live on a very uncertain eminence, and for that reason I wanted to see my darling daughter settled securely."

"Well, mamma, now I will tell you what I have been thinking of. Since 'riches make to themselves wings and fly away,' what is the sense of marrying a man whose main recommendation is, that he is rich? Because that is the thing that makes Mr. Sydney more, for instance, than Mr.

Henderson, or any other nice gentleman we know. Now what if I should marry Mr. Sydney, who, to say the truth, dear mamma, I do not fancy, and who is rather tiresome to me—and then some fine morning his banks should fail, his railroads burst up, and his place on the North River and his villa at Newport have to be sold, and he and I have to take a little unfashionable house together, and rough it—what then? Why, then, when it came to that, I should wish that I had chosen a more entertaining companion. For there isn't a thing that I am interested in that I can talk with him about. You see, dear mother, we have to take it 'for better or for worse;' and as there is always danger that the wheel may turn, by and by it may come so that we'll have nothing but the man himself left. It seems to me that we should choose our man with great care. He should be like the pearl of great price, the Bible speaks of, for whom we would be glad to sell everything. It should be somebody we could be happy with if we lost all beside. And when I marry, mother, it will be with a man that I feel is all that to me."

"Well, Eva dear, where'll you find such a man?"

"What if I had found him, mother—or thought I had?"

"What do you mean, child?"

"Mother, I have found the man that I love, and he loves me, and we are engaged."

"Eva, child! I would not have thought this of you. Why haven't you told me before?"

"Because, mamma, it was only this afternoon that I found out that he loved me and wanted me to be his wife."

"And may I presume to ask now who it is?" said Mrs. Van Arsdel, in a tone of pique.

"Dear mother, it is Harry Henderson."

"Mr. Henderson! Well, I do think that is too dishonorable; when I told him your relations with Mr. Sydney."

"Mother, you gave him to understand that I was engaged to Mr. Sydney, and I told him, this afternoon, that I was not, and never would be. He was honorable. After you had that conversation with him, he avoided our house a long time, and avoided me. I was wretched about it, and he was wretched; but this afternoon we met accidentally in the Park; and I insisted on knowing from him why he avoided us so. And, at last, I found out all; and he found out all. We understand each other perfectly now, and nothing can ever come between us. Mother, I would go with him to the ends of the earth. There is nothing that I do not feel able to do or suffer for him. And I am glad and proud of myself to know that I can love him as I do."

"Oh well, poor child! I do not know what we shall do," said Mrs. Van Arsdel, with profound dejection.

"Deary mother, I will do everything I can to help you, and everything I can to help papa. I do not believe there is one of us children that would not. And I think it is true, what Ida is always telling us, that it would be a great deal better for us if we had less, and had to depend on ourselves and use our own faculties more. There are the boys in college; there is no need of their having spending-money as they do. And I know if papa would tell them of his difficulties it would make men of them, just as it would make a woman of me."

"Well, I do not know," said Mrs. Van Arsdel. "Your father has not told me of any particular embarrassments, only I see he is anxious and nervous, and I know him so well that I always know when his affairs trouble him. And this is a great blow to me, Eva."

"Well, dear mother, I am very sorry it is so; but I cannot help it. It would be wicked for me, mother, to marry any other man when I love Harry as I do. Love is not a glove that you can take off as you please. It is something very different. Now, with him, I never felt tired. I always like to be with him; I always like to talk with him; he never makes me nervous; I never wish he was gone; he can always understand me, and I can understand him. We can almost tell what the other is thinking of without speaking. And I will risk our not being happy together. So please do, dear mother, look a little cheerful about it. Let me be happy in my own way."

"Well, I suppose I must," said Mrs. Van Arsdel, with a deep sigh, taking up the lamp. "You always did have your own way, Eva."

"Oh, well, mother dear; some day you'll be glad of it. Good night."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FURTHER CONSULTATIONS.

AFTER the departure of her mother, Eva in vain tried to compose herself to sleep. Her cheeks were flushed, and her brain was in a complete whirl. Her mother had said and hinted just enough about the financial condition of the family to fill her with vague alarms. She walked uneasily up and down her luxurious chamber, all whose appointments spoke of wealth and taste; and it was with an unpleasant feeling of insecurity that she regarded the pictures and statues and sofas, and all the charming arrangements, in perfecting which her father had always allowed her *carte blanche* as to money. She reflected uneasily, that in making all these expensive arrangements, she had ordered simply what pleased her fancy, without inquiry as to price, and without ever glancing over a bill to know the result; and now, she found herself affianced to a young man without any other resources than those which must come from the exertion of his talents, seconded by prudence and economy. And here, again, offered to her acceptance, was another marriage, which would afford her the means of gratifying every taste, and of continuing to live in all those habits of easy luxury and careless expenses that she could not but feel were very agreeable to her. Not for one moment did she feel an inclination, or a temptation, to purchase that luxury, and that ease, by the sale of herself; but still, when she thought of her lover—of the difficulties that he must necessarily meet, of the cares which she must bring upon him—she asked herself, "Was it not an act of injustice to him to burden him with so incapable and helpless a wife, as she feared she should prove?"

"But I *am not* incapable," she said to herself, "and I *will not* be helpless. I have strength in me, and I will use it; I will show that I am good for something. I wonder if it is true that papa is embarrassed. If he is, I wish he would trust us; I wish he would tell us at once, and let us help him economize. I would do it; I am sure we all would do it."

It was in vain, under the pressure of these thoughts, to try to compose herself to sleep; and, at last, she passed into her sister Ida's room, who, with her usual systematic regularity as to hours, had for a long time been in the enjoyment of quiet slumber.

"Ida, dear!" she said, stooping over and speaking to her sister, "Ida, look here!"

Ida opened her eyes, and sat up in bed. "Why, Eva, child! not gone to bed yet? What is the matter with you? You will certainly ruin your health with these irregular hours."

"Oh, Ida, I am so nervous I can't sleep! I am sorry to disturb you; but, indeed, I want to talk to you about something that worries me; and you know you are always gone before I am up in the morning."

"Well, dear, what is it?" said Ida, stroking her head.

"Do you know, mamma has just been into my room with a letter from Mr. Sydney. He is coming into the field again, and has written to mamma, and mamma has been in talking to me till I am just ready to cry. Now, Ida, you know all that took place between Mr. Henderson and me yesterday in the Park; we are engaged, are we not, as much as two people can be?"

"Certainly you are," said Ida, decisively.

"Well now, mamma is so distressed and disappointed."

"You told her about it, then?" said Ida.

"Certainly; yes, I told her all about it; and oh, Ida! what do you think? mamma really made me feel as if something dreadful was going to happen in the family, that papa was getting embarrassed in his business, and perhaps we might all fail and come to ruin if I did not help him by marrying Mr. Sydney. Now, do you think it would be right for me? It certainly can not be my duty!"

"Ask yourself that question," said Ida; "think what you must promise and vow in marriage."

"To be sure! and how wicked it would be to promise and vow all that to one man when I *know* that I love another one better!"

"Then," said Ida, "asking a woman to take false marriage vows to save her family, or her parents from trouble, is just like asking her to steal money, or forge a false note to save them. Eva, you cannot do it."

"Well," said Eva, "that is what I told mamma. But, Ida dear, is it really true, do you think, that papa is troubled in his business?"

"Papa is not a man that would speak freely to any woman on business matters," said Ida, "not even to me; but I know that his liabilities and ventures are terrific; and nothing would surprise me less than to have this whole air-castle that we have been living in dissolve like a morning mist, and let us down on the pavement. All I have to say is, that if it comes it is just what I have been preparing for all my life. I have absolutely refused to be made such a helpless doll as young girls in our position commonly are. I have determined that I would keep my faculties bright, and my bodily health firm and strong; and that all these luxuries should not become a necessity to me, so but what I could take care of myself, and take care of others, without them. And all I have to say is, if a crash comes it will find *me* ready, and it won't crush me."

"But, Ida, don't you think it would be a great deal better if we would all begin now to economize, and live very differently? Why, I am sure I would be willing to move out of this house, and rent it, or sell it, and live in a smaller one, and give up the carriages and horses. We could live a great deal cheaper and more quietly than we do, and yet have everything that I care about. Yes, I'd even rather sell the pictures—all except a few—and feel safe and independent, than to live in this sort of glittering, uncertain way, and be pressed to marry a man that I do not love, for the sake of getting out of it."

"Well, dear," said Ida, "you never will get Aunt Maria to let ma stop running this race with the Elmores till the last gun fires, and the ship is ready to sink; that's the whole of it. It is *what people will say*, and the thought of being pitied by their set, and being beaten in the race, that will go further than anything else. If you talk about any drawing in of expenses, they say that we must not do anything of the sort—that it will injure papa's credit. Now I know enough of what things cost, and what business estimates are, to know that we are spending at a tremendous rate. If we had an entailed estate settled upon us with an annual income of two or three hundred thousand dollars, there might be some sense in living as we do; but when all depends on the value of stocks that are going up to-day and down to-morrow, there is never any knowing what may happen; and *that* is what I have always felt. Father made a lucky hit by investing in stocks that doubled, and trebled, and quadrupled in value; but now, there is a combination against them, and they are falling. I know it gives father great anxiety; and, as I said before, I should not wonder in the least—nothing would surprise me less, than that we should have a great crisis one of these times."

"Poor Harry!" said Eva, "it was the thought of my being an heiress that made him hesitate so long; perhaps he'll have a chance to take me without that obstacle. Ida, do you think it would be right and just in me to let him take such an inefficient body as I am? Am I quite spoiled, do you think—past all redemption?"

"Oh, no, darling!" said Ida; "I have good hopes of you. In the first place, a woman that has strength of mind enough to be true to her love against all the pressure that has been brought to bear on you, has strength of mind to do anything that may be required of her. Of course, dear, it will come to the practical point of living in an entirely different style from what we now live in; and you must count the cost. In the first place, you must give up fashionable society altogether. You must consent to be pitied and wondered at as one that has fallen out of her sphere and gone down in the world. All the Mrs. Grundys will stop calling on you; and you won't have any turn-out in the Park; and you may have to take a small house on an unfashionable street, and give your mind to the business of calculating expenses, and watching outgoes and incomes."

"Well, now, seriously, Ida, I shouldn't mind these things a bit. I don't care a penny for Mrs. Grundy, nor her works and ways. As to the little house, there'll be the less care to keep it; and as to its being on an unfashionable street, what do I care for that? Nobody that I really care for would fail to come and see me, let me live where I would. And Harry and I just agree in our views of life. We are not going to live for the world, but for ourselves and our friends. We'll have the nicest little home, where every true friend of ours shall feel as much at home as we do. And don't you think, Ida, that I should make a good manager? Oh! I know that I could make a house pretty—charming—on ever so little money, just as I get up a Spring hat, sometimes, out of odds and ends; and I quite like the idea of having it to do. Of course, poor papa, I don't want him to fail; and I hope he won't; but I'm something like you, Ida, if all should go to ruin, I feel as if I could stand up, now, that I have got Harry to stand up with me. We can begin quietly at first, and make our fortune together. I have thought of ever so many things that I could do for him to help him. Do you know, Ida,—(I rather guess you'll laugh)—that I brought home his gloves and mended them this very evening? I told him I was going to begin to take care of him. You see I'll make it cheaper for him in a thousand ways—I know I can. He never shall find me a burden. I am quite impatient to be able to show what I can do."

"To begin, darling," said Ida, "one thing you must do is, to take care of your body; no late hours to waste your little brain. And so don't you think you had better go to your room and go quietly to sleep?"

"Oh, Ida! I am going to be so good and so regular after to-night; but to-night, you know, is a kind of exception. Girls don't get engaged every day of their lives, and so you must forgive me if I do make a run upon you to-night. The fact is, what with my talk with Harry this afternoon, and with mamma to-night, and all the fuss that I see impending, my eyes are just as wide open as they can be; and I don't believe I could go to sleep if I were to try. Oh, Ida! Harry told me all about his mother, and all about that handsome cousin of his, that he has spoken of so many times. Do you know I used to have such worries of mind about that cousin? I was perfectly sure that she stood in my way. And now, Ida, I have a most capital idea about her! She wants to go to France to study, just as you do; and how nice it would be if you could join company and go together."

"It would be pleasant," said Ida. "I must confess I don't like the idea of being '*damsel errant,*' wandering off entirely alone in the world; and if I leave you, darling, I shall want somebody to speak to. But come, my dear little pussy, you must lie down and shut your eyes, and say your prayers, and try to go to sleep."

"You darling good little doctor, you," said Eva, "it is too bad of me to keep you up! There, I will be good—see how good I am! Good night"—and kissing her sister, she sought her own apartment.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MAKING LOVE TO ONE'S FATHER-IN-LAW.

LIFE has many descents from romance to reality that are far from agreeable. But every exalted hour, and every charming passage in our mortal pilgrimage, is a luxury that has to be paid for with something disagreeable. The German story-teller, Tieck, has a pretty legend of a magical region where were marvelous golden castles, and fountains, and flowers, and bright-winged elves, living a life of ceaseless pleasure; but all this was visible only to the anointed eyes of some favored mortal to whom was granted the vision. To all others this elfin country was a desolate wilderness. I had had given me within a day or two that vision of Wonderland, and wandered—scarce knowing whether in the body or out—in its enchanted bowers. The first exhilarating joy of the moment when every mist rose up from the landscape of love; when there was perfect understanding, perfect union, perfect rest; was something that transfigured life. But having wandered in this blessed country and spoken the tongue of angels, I was now to return to every-day regions and try to translate its marvels and mysteries into the vernacular of mortals. In short, I was to wait upon Mr. Van Arsdel and ask of him the hand of his daughter.

Now however charming, with suitable encouragement, to make love to a beautiful lady, making love to a prospective father-in-law is quite another matter.

Men are not as a general thing inclined to look sympathetically on other men in love with any fine woman of their acquaintance, and are rather provoked than otherwise to have them accepted. "What any woman can see in that fellow!" is a sort of standing problem. But possessors of daughters, are, *a fortiori*, enemies ready made to every pretender to their hands. My own instincts made me aware of this, and I could easily fancy that had I a daughter like Eva I should be ready to shoot the fellow who came to take her from me.

Mr. Van Arsdel, it is true, had showed me, hitherto, in his quiet way, marked favor. He was seldom much of a talker, though a shrewd observer of all that was said by others. He had listened silently to all our discussions and conversations in Ida's library, and oftentimes to the reading of the articles I had subjected to the judgment of the ladies; sometimes, though very rarely, interposing little bits of common sense criticism which showed keen good sense, and knowledge of the world.

Mr. Van Arsdel, like many of our merchant princes, had come from a rural district, and an early experience of the hard and frugal life of a farm. Good sense, acute observation, an ability to take wide and clear views of men and things, and an incorruptible integrity, had been the means of his rise to his present elevation. He was a true American man in another respect, and that was his devotion to women. In America, where we have a clear democracy, women hold that influence over men that is exerted by the aristocracy in other countries. They are something to be looked up to, petted, and courted. The human mind seems to require something of this kind. The faith and fealty that the middle-class Englishman has toward his nobility is not all snobbery. It has something of poetry in it—it is his romance of life. Up in those airy regions where walk the nobility, he is at liberty to fancy some higher, finer types of manhood and womanhood than he sees in the ordinary ways of life, and he adores the unseen and unknown. The American life would become vulgar and common-place did not a chivalrous devotion to women come in to supply the place of recognized orders of nobility. The true democrat sees no superior in rank among men, but all women are by courtesy his superiors.

Mr. Van Arsdel had married a beauty and a belle. When she chose him from among a crowd of suitors he could scarcely believe his own eyes or ears, or help marveling at the wondrous grace of the choice; and, as he told her so, Mrs. Van Arsdel believed him, and their subsequent life was arranged on that understanding. The Van Arsdel house was an empire where women ruled, though as the queen was a pretty, motherly woman, her reign was easy and flowery.

Mr. Van Arsdel delighted in the combinations of business for its own sake. It was his form of mental activity. He liked the effort, the strife, the care, the labor, the success of winning; but when money was once won he cared not a copper for all those forms of luxury and show, for the pride, pomp, and circumstance of fashion, which were all in all to his wife.

In his secret heart he considered the greater part of the proceedings in and about his splendid establishment as a rather expensive species of humbug; but then it was what the women wanted and desired, and he took it all quietly and without comment. I felt somewhat nervous when I asked a private interview with him in Ida's library.

"I have told mamma, Harry," whispered Eva, "and she is beginning to get over it."

Mrs. Van Arsdel received me with an air of patient endurance, as if I had been the toothache or any of the other inevitable inflictions of life; Miss Alice was distant and reserved, and only Ida was cordial.

I found Mr. Van Arsdel dry, cold, and wary, not in the least encouraging any sentimental effusion, and therefore I proceeded to speak to him with as matter-of-fact directness as if the treaty related to a bag of wool.

"Mr. Van Arsdel, I love your daughter. She has honored me so far as to accept of my love, and I have her permission to ask your consent to our marriage.'

He took off his spectacles, wiped them deliberately while I was speaking, and coughed drily.

"Mr. Henderson," he said, "I have always had a great respect for you so far as I knew you, but I must confess I don't know why I should want to give you my daughter."

"Simply, sir, because in the order of nature you must give her to somebody, and I have the honor to be chosen by her."

"Eva could do better, her mother thinks."

"I am aware that Miss Van Arsdel could marry a man with more money than I have, but none who would love her more or be more devoted to her happiness. Besides I have the honor to be the man of her choice, and perhaps you may be aware that Miss Eva is a young lady of very decided preferences."

He smiled drily, and looked at me with a funny twinkle in his eye..

"Eva has always been used to having her own way," he remarked.

"Then, my dear sir, I must beg leave to say that the choice of a companion for life is a place where a lady has a good right to insist on her own way."

"Well, Mr. Henderson, you may be right. But perhaps her parents ought to insist that she shall not make an imprudent marriage."

"Mr. Van Arsdel, I do not conceive that I am proposing an imprudent marriage. I have not wealth to offer, it is true, but I have a reasonable prospect of being able to support a wife and family. I have good firm health, I have good business habits, I have a profession which already assures me a certain income, and an influential position in society."

"What do you call your profession?"

"Literature," I replied.

He looked skeptical, and I added—"Yes, Mr. Van Arsdel, in our day literature is a profession in which one may hope for both fame and money."

"It is rather an uncertain one, isn't it?" said he.

"I think not. A business which proposes to supply a great, permanent, constantly increasing demand you must admit to be a good one. The demand for current reading is just as wide and steady as any demand of our life, and the men who undertake to supply it have as certain a business as those that undertake to supply cotton cloth or railroad iron. At this day fortunes are being made in and by literature."

Mr. Van Arsdel drummed on the table abstractedly

"Now," said I, determined to speak in the language of men and things, "the case is just this: If a young man of good, reliable habits, good health, and good principles, has a capital of seventy thousand dollars invested in a fair paying business, has he not a prospect of supporting a family in comfort?"

"Yes," said Mr. Van Arsdel, regarding me curiously, "I should call that a good beginning."

"Well," rejoined I, "my health, my education, my power of doing literary work, are this capital. They secure to me for the next year an income equal to that of seventy thousand dollars at ten per cent. Now, I think a capital of that amount invested in a *man*, is quite as safe as the same sum invested in any stocks whatever. It seems to me that in our country a *man* who knows how to take care of his health is less likely to become unproductive in income than any stock you can name"

"There is something in that, I admit," replied Mr. Van Arsdel.

"And there's something in *this*, too, papa," said Eva, who entered at this moment and could not resist her desire to dip her oar in the current of conversation, "and that is, that an investment that you have got to take for better or worse and can't sell or get rid of all your life, had better be made in something you are sure you will like."

"And are you sure of that in this case, Pussy?" said her father, pinching her cheek.

"Tolerably, as men go. Mr. Henderson is the least tiresome man of my acquaintance, and you know, papa, it's time I took somebody; you don't want me to go into a convent, do you?"

"How about poor Mr. Sydney?"

"Poor Mr. Sydney has just called, and I have invited him to a private audience and convinced him that I am not, in the least, the person to make him happy—and he is one of the sort that feel that it is of the last importance that he should be made happy."

"Well, well! Mr. Henderson, I presume you have seen, in the course of your observations, that this is one of the houses where the women rule. You and Eva will have to settle it with her mother."

"Then I am to understand," exclaimed I, "that, as far as *you* are concerned ——!"

"I *submit*," said Mr. Van Arsdel.

"The ayes have it, then," said Eva.

"I'm not so sure of that, young lady," said Mr. Van Arsdel, "if I may judge by the way your mother lamented to me last night."

"Oh, that's all Aunt Maria! You see, papa, this is an age of revolution, and there's going to be a revolution in the Aunt Maria dynasty in our house. She has governed mamma and all the rest of us long enough, and now she must go down and I must rule. Harry and I are going to start a new era and have things all our own way. I'm going to crown him King, and he then will crown me Queen, and then we shall proceed to rule and reign in our own dominions, and Aunt Maria, and Mrs. Grundy, and all the rest of them, may help themselves; they can't hinder us. We shall be happy in our own way, without consulting them."

"Well, well!" said Mr. Van Arsdel, following with an amused eye, a pirouette Eva executed at the conclusion of her speech, "you young folks are venturesome."

"Yes, papa, I am 'The woman who dared,'" said Eva.

"'Nothing venture, nothing have,'" quoted I.

"Eva knows no more about managing money than a this year's robin," said her father.

"Yet this year's robins know how to build respectable nests when their time comes," said she. "They don't bother about investments and stocks and all those things, but sing and have a good time. It all comes right for them, and I don't doubt it will for us."

"You have a decided talent for spending money most agreeably, I confess," said Mr. Van Arsdel.

"Now, papa, it's too bad for you to be running down your own daughter! I'm not appreciated. I have a world of undeveloped genius for management. Harry has agreed to teach me accounts, and as I belong to the class who always grow wiser than their teachers, I'm sure that before six months are over I shall be able to suggest improved methods to him. When I get a house you'll all be glad to come and see me, I shall make it so bright and sunny and funny, and give you such lovely things to eat; and in *my* house everybody shall do just as they please, and have their own way if they can find out what it is. I know people will like it."

"I believe you, Pussy," said Mr. Van Arsdel; "but houses don't grow on bushes, you know."

"Well, haven't I six thousand dollars, all my own, that grandma left me?"

"And how much of a house do you think that would buy?"

"Perhaps as big a one as you and mother began in."

"You never would be satisfied with such a house as we began in."

"Why not? Are we any better than you were?"

"No. But nowadays no young folks are contented to do as we did."

"Then, papa, you are going to see a new thing upon the earth, for Harry and I are going to be pattern folks for being rational and contented. We are going to start out on a new tack and bring in the golden age. But, bless me! there's Aunt Maria coming down the street! Now, Harry, comes the tug of war. I am going now to emancipate mamma and proclaim the new order of things," and out she flitted.

"Mr. Henderson," said Mr. Van Arsdel, when she had gone, "I think it is about certain that I am to look on you as a future member of our family. I'll be fair with you, that you may take steps with your eyes open. My daughters are supposed to be heiresses, but, as things are tending, in a very short time I may be put back to where I started in life and have all to begin over. My girls will have nothing. I see such a crisis impending and I have no power to help it."

"My dear sir," said I, "while I shall be sorry for your trouble, and hope it may not come, I shall be only too glad to prove my devotion to Eva."

"It is evident," said Mr. Arsdel, "that her heart is set on you, and, after all, the only true comfort is in having the one you want. I myself never cared for fashion, Mr. Henderson, nor parties, nor any of this kind of fuss and show the women think so much of; and I believe that Eva is a little like me. I like to go back to the old place in summer and eat huckleberries and milk, and see the cows come home from pasture, and sit in father's old arm-chair. It wouldn't take so much running and scheming and hard thinking and care to live, if folks were all of my mind. Why, up in New Hampshire where I came from, there's scarcely ever an estate administered upon that figures up more than five thousand dollars, and yet they all live well—have nice houses, nice tables, give money in charity, and make a good thing of life."

There was something really quite pathetic in this burst of confidence from the worthy man. Perhaps I was the first one to whom he had confessed the secret apprehensions with which he was struggling.

"You see, Mr. Henderson, you never can tell about investments. Stocks that seem to stand as firm as the foundations of the earth, that the very oldest and shrewdest and longest-headed put into, run down and depreciate—and when they get running you can't draw out, you see. Now I advanced capital for the new Lightning Line Railroad to the amount of two hundred thousand, and pledged my Guatemala stock for the money, and then arose this combination against the Guatemala stock, and it has fallen to a fourth of its value in six months, and it takes heavy rowing—heavy. I'd a great deal rather be in father's old place, with an estate of five thousand dollars, and read my newspaper in peace, than to have all I have with the misery of managing it. I may work out and I may not."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ACCEPTED AND ENGAGED.

AND so at last I was accepted, and my engagement with Eva was recognized as a *fait accompli.*

In the family of my betrothed were all shades of acquiescence. Mrs. Van Arsdel was pensively resigned to me as a mysterious dispensation of Providence. Mr. Van Arsdel, though not in any way demonstrative, showed an evident disposition to enter into confidential relations with me. Ida was whole-hearted and cordial; and Alice, after a little reconnoitering, joined our party as a gay, generous young girl, naturally disposed to make the best of things, and favorably inclined toward the interests of young lovers.

Mr. Trollope, in *The Small House at Allington*, represents a young man just engaged, as feeling himself in the awkward position of a captive led out in triumph, for exhibition. The lady and her friends are spoken of as marching him forth with complacency, like a prize ox with ribbons in his horns, unable to repress the exhibition of their delight in having entrapped him. One would infer from this picture of life such a scarcity of marriageable men that the capture even of such game as young Crosbie, who is represented to be an untitled young man, without fortune or principle, is an occasion of triumph.

In our latitudes, we of the stronger sex are not taught to regard ourselves as such overpoweringly delightful acquisitions, and the declaration of an engagement is not with us regarded as evidence of a lady's skill in hunting. I did not, as young Crosbie is said to have done, feel myself somehow *caught.* On the contrary, I was lost in wonder at my good fortune. If I had found the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, or dug up the buried treasures of Captain Kidd, I could not have seemed to myself more as one who dreamed.

I wrote all about it to my mother, who, if she judged by my letters, must have believed "Hesperian fables" true for the first time in the world, and that a woman had been specially made and created out of all impossible and fabulous elements of joy. The child-wife of my early days, the dream-wife of my youth, were both living, moving, breathing in this wonderful reality. I tried to disguise my good fortune—to walk soberly and behave myself among men as if I were sensible and rational, and not dazed and enchanted. I felt myself orbed in a magical circle, out of which I looked pityingly on everybody that was not *I*. A spirit of universal match-making benevolence possessed me. I wanted everybody I liked to be engaged. I pitied and made allowances for everybody that was not. How could they be happy or good that had not my fortune? They had not, they never could have, an *Eva*. There was but one Eva, and I had her!

I woke every morning with a strange, new thrill of joy. Was it so? Was she still in this world, or had this impossible, strange mirage of bliss risen like a mist and floated heavenward? I trembled when I thought how frail a thing human life is. Was it possible that she might die? Was it possible that an accident in a railroad car, a waft of drapery toward an evening lamp, a thoughtless false step, a mistake in a doctor's prescription, might cause this lovely life to break like a bubble, and be utterly gone, and there be no more Eva, never, nevermore on earth? The very intensity of love and hope suggested the possibility of the dreadful tragedy that every moment underlies life; that with every joy connects the possibility of a proportioned pain. Surely love, if nothing else, inclines the soul to feel its helplessness and be prayerful, to place its treasures in a Father's hand.

Sometimes it seemed to me too much to hope for, that she should live to be my wife; that the fabulous joy of possession should ever be mine. Each morning I left my bunch of fresh violets with a greeting in it at her door, and assured myself that the earth yet retained her, and all day long I worked with the under-thought of the little boudoir where I should meet her in the evening. Who says modern New York life is prosaic? The everlasting poem of man and woman is as fresh there at this hour as among the crocuses and violets of Eden.

A graceful writer, in one of our late magazines, speaks of the freedom which a young man feels when he has found the mistress and queen of his life. He is bound to no other service, he is anxious about no other smile or frown. I had been approved and crowned by my Queen of Love and Beauty. If *she* liked me, what matter about the rest?

It did not disturb me a particle to feel that I was submitted to as a necessity, rather than courted as a blessing, by her parents. I cared nothing for cold glances or indifferent airs so long as my golden-haired Ariadne threw me the clew by which I threaded the labyrinth, and gave me the talisman by which to open the door. Once safe with her in her little "Italy," the boudoir in which we first learned to know each other, we laughed and chatted, making ourselves a gay committee of observation on the whole world besides. Was there anybody so fortunate as we? and was there any end to our subject-matter for conversation?

"You have no idea, Harry," she said to me, the first evening after our engagement had been declared, "what a time we've been having with Aunt Maria! You know she is mamma's oldest sister, and mamma is one of the gentle, yielding sort, and Aunt Maria has always ruled and reigned over us all. She really has a way of ordering mamma about, and mamma I think is positively afraid of her. Not that she's really ill-tempered, but she is one of the sort that thinks it's a matter of course that she should govern the world, and is perfectly astonished when she finds she can't. I have never resisted her before, because I have been rather lazy, and it's easier to give up than to fight; and besides one remembers one's catechism, and doesn't want to rise up against one's pastors and masters."

"But you thought you had come to a place where amiability ceased to be a virtue?" said I.

"Exactly. Ida always said that people must have courage to be disagreeable, or they couldn't be good for much; and so I put on all my terrors, and actually bullied Aunt Maria into submission."

"You must have been terrific," said I, laughing.

"Indeed, you ought to have seen me! I astonished myself. I told her that she always had domineered over us all, but that now the time had come that she must let my mother alone, and not torment her; that, as for myself, I was a woman and not a child, and that I should choose my lot in life for myself, as I had a right to do. I assure you, there was warm work for a little while, but I remained mistress of the field."

"It was a revolutionary struggle," said I.

"Exactly,—a fight at the barricades; and as a result a new government is declared. Mamma reigns in her own house and I am her prime minister. On the whole I think mamma is quite delighted to be protected in giving me my own way, as she always has. Aunt Maria has shaken dreadful warnings and threatenings at me, and exhausted a perfect bead-roll of instances of girls that had married for love and come to grief. You'd have thought that nothing less than beggary and starvation was before us; and the more I laughed the more solemn and awful she grew. She didn't spare me. She gave me a sad character. I hadn't been educated for anything, and I didn't know how to do anything, and I was nothing of a housekeeper, and I had no strength; in short, she made out such a picture of my incapacities as may well make you tremble."

"I don't tremble in the least," said I. "I only wish we could set up our establishment to-morrow."

"Aunt Maria told me that it was ungenerous of me to get engaged to a man of no fortune, now when papa is struggling with these heavy embarrassments, and can't afford the money to marry me, and set me up in the style he would feel obliged to. You see, Aunt Maria is thinking of a wedding twice as big as the Elmores, and a *trousseau* twice as fine, and a brown-stone front palace twice as high and long and broad as the Rivingtons; and twice as many coupés and Park wagons and phaetons as Maria Rivington is to have; and if papa is to get all this for me, it will be the ruin of him, she says."

"And you told her that we didn't want any of them?" said I.

"To be sure I did. I told her that we didn't want one of these vulgar, noisy, showy, expensive weddings, and that I didn't mean to send to Paris for my things. That a young lady who respected herself was always supplied with clothes good enough to be married with; that we didn't want a brown stone palace, and could be very happy without any carriage; and that there were plenty of cheap little houses in unfashionable streets we could be very happy in; that people who really cared for us would come to see us, live where we would, and that those who didn't care might keep away."

"Bravo, my queen! and you might tell her how Mad. Récamier drew all the wit and fashion of Paris to her little brick-floored rooms in the old Abbey. People will always want to come where *you* are."

"I don't set up for a Récamier," she exclaimed, "but I do say that where people have good times, and keep a bright pleasant fireside, and are always glad to see friends, there will always be friends to come; and *friends* are the ones we want."

"Ah! we will show them how things can be done, won't we?"

"Indeed we will. I always wanted a nice little house all my own where I could show what I could do. I have quantities of pet ideas of what a home should be, and I always fancied I could make things lovely."

"If you couldn't, who could?" said I, enchanted.

"See here," she added, "I have just begun to think what we have to start with. All the pictures in this little room are mine, bought with my own allowance; they are my very own. Pictures, you know, are a great thing, they half furnish a house. Then you know that six thousand dollars that grandmamma left me! Besides, sir, only think, a whole silver cream-pitcher and six tablespoons! Why, Harry, I'm an heiress in my own right, even if poor papa should come to grief."

Something in this talk reminded me of the far-off childish days when Susie and I made our play-houses under the old butternut tree, and gathered in our stores of chestnuts and walnuts and laid our grave plans for life as innocently as two squirrels, and I laughed with a tear in my eye. I recounted to her the little idyl, and said that it had been a foreshadowing of her, and that perhaps my child angel had guided me to her.

"Some day you shall take me up there, Harry, and show me where you and she played together, and we will gather strawberries and lilies and hear the bobolinks," she said. "How little the world knows how cheap happiness is!"

"To those that know where to look for it," said I.

"I heard papa telling you that half the estates on which good New England families live in comfort up there in the country don't amount to more than five thousand dollars, yet they live well, and they have all those lovely things around them *free.* Here in this artificial city life people struggle and suffer to get money for things they don't want and don't need. Nobody wants these great parties, with their candy pyramids and their artificial flowers and their rush and crush that tire one to death, and yet they pay as much for one as would keep one of those country houses going for a year. I do wish we could live there!"

"I do too—with all my heart, but my work must lie here. We must make what the French call an *Interior* here in New York. I shall have to be within call of printers and the slave of printers' devils, but in summer we will go up into the mountains and stay with my mother, and have it all to ourselves."

"Do you know, Harry," said Eva after a pause, "I can see that Sophie Elmore really does admire Sydney. I can't help wondering how one can, but I see she does. Now don't you hope she'll get engaged to him?"

"Certainly I do," said I, "I want all nice people to be engaged if they have as good a time as we do. It's my solution of the woman question,"

"Well, do you know I managed my last interview with Sydney with reference to that? I made what you would call a split-shot in croquet to send him from me and to her."

"How did you do it?"

"Oh, don't ask me to describe. There are ways of managing these men that are incommunicable. One can play on them as upon a piano, and I'll wager you a pair of gloves that Sydney goes off after Sophie. She's too good for him, but she likes him, and Sophie will make him a nice wife. But only think of poor Aunt Maria! It will be the last stroke that breaks the camel's back to have the Elmores get Sydney."

"So long as he doesn't get you, I shall be delighted," said I.

"Now only think," she added, "this Spring I was drifting into an engagement with that man just because I was idle, and *blasée* and didn't know what to do next, and didn't have force enough to keep saying 'No' to mamma and Aunt Maria and all the rest of them."

"And what gave you force?"

"Well, sir, I couldn't help seeing that *somebody else* was getting very prettily entangled, and I felt a sort of philosophic interest in watching the process, and somehow—you know—I was rather sorry for you."

"Well?"

"Well, and I began to feel that anybody else would be intolerable, and you know they say there must be somebody."

"But me you could tolerate? Thank you, for so much."

"Yes, Harry, I think you are rather agreeable. I couldn't fancy myself sitting a whole evening with Sydney as I do with you. I always had to resort to whist and all sorts of go-betweens to keep him entertained; and I couldn't fancy that I ever should run to the window to see if he were coming in the evening, or long for him to come back when he was on a journey. I'm afraid I should long quite the other way and want him to go journeys often. But Sophie will do all these things. Poor man! somebody ought to, for he wouldn't be a bit satisfied if his wife were not devoted. I told him that, and told him that he needed a woman capable of more devotion than I could feel, and flattered him up a little—poor fellow, he took to it so kindly! And after a while I contrived to let fall a nice bit of a compliment I had once heard about him from a lady, who I remarked was usually a little fastidious, and hard to please, and you ought to have seen how animated he looked! A mouse in view of a bit of toasted cheese never was more excited. I wouldn't tell him who it was, yet I sent him off on such a track that he inevitably will find out. That's what I call sending Sophie a ball to play on. You see if they don't have a great wedding about the time we have our little one!"

CHAPTER XL.

CONGRATULATIONS, ETC.

THE announcement of my engagement brought the usual influx of congratulations by letter and in person. Bolton was gravely delighted, shook my hand paternally, and even promised to quit his hermit hole and go with me to call upon the Van Arsdels.

As to Jim, he raised a notable breeze among the papers. "Engaged!—*you*, sly dog, after all! Well! well! Let your sentimental fellows alone for knowing what they're about. All your sighing, and poetry, and friendship, and disinterestedness and all that don't go for nothing. Up to '*biz*' after all! Well, you've done a tolerably fair stroke! Those Van Arsdel girls are good for a hundred thousand down, and the rest will come in the will. Well, joy to you, my boy! Remember your old grandfather."

Now there was no sort of use in going into high heroics with Jim, and I had to resign myself to being congratulated as a successful fortune-hunter, a thing against which all my resolution and all my pride had always been directed. I had every appearance of being caught in the fact, and Jim was prepared to make the most of the situation.

"I declare, Hal," he said, perching himself astride a chair, "such things make a fellow feel solemn. We never know when our turn may come. Nobody feels safe a minute; it's you to-day and me to-morrow. I may be engaged before the week is out—who knows!"

"If nothing worse than that happens to you, you needn't be frightened," said I. "Better try your luck. I don't find it bad to take at all."

"Oh, but think of the consequences, man! Wedding journey, bandboxes and parasols to look after; beefsteaks and coffee for two; house rent and water taxes; marketing, groceries; all coming down on you like a thousand of brick! And then 'My dear, won't you see to this?' and 'My dear, have you seen to that?' and 'My dear, what makes you let it rain?' and 'My dear, how many times must I tell you I don't like hot weather?' and 'My dear, won't you just step out and get me the new moon and seven stars to trim my bonnet?' That's what I call getting a fellow into business! It's a solemn thing, Hal, now I tell you, this getting married!"

"If it makes you solemn, Jim, I shall believe it," I said.

"Well, when is it to come off? When is the blissful day?"

"No time fixed as yet," said I.

"Why not? You ought to drive things. Nothing under heaven to wait for except to send to Paris for the folderols. Well, I shall call up and congratulate. If Miss Alice there would take me, there might be a pair of us. Wouldn't it be jolly? I say, Hal, how did you get it off?"

"Get what off?"

"Why, the question."

"You'll have to draw on your imagination for that, Jim."

"I tell you what, Harry, I won't offer myself to a girl on uncertainties. I'd pump like thunder first and find out whether she'd have me or not."

"I fancy," said I, "that if you undertake that process with Miss Alice, you'll have your match. I think she has as many variations of yes and no as a French woman."

"She doesn't catch this child," said Jim, "though she's *mag.* and no mistake. Soberly, she's one of the nicest girls in New York—but Jim's time isn't come yet.

'Oh, no, no! not for Joe,
Not for Joseph, if he knows it,
Oh, dear, no!'

So now, Hal, don't disturb my mind with these trifles. I've got three books to review before dinner, and only an hour and a half to do it in."

In my secret heart I began to wish that the embarrassments that were hanging over the Van Arsdel fortunes would culminate and come to a crisis one way or another, so that our position might appear to the world what it really was. Mr. Van Arsdel's communications to me were so far confidential that I did not feel that I could allude to the real state of things even with my most intimate friends; so that while I was looked upon from the outside as the prospective winner of an heiress, Eva and I were making all our calculations for the future on the footing of the strictest prudence and economy. Everybody was looking for splendor and festivities; we were enacting a secret pastoral, in which we forsook the grandeurs of the world to wander forth hand in hand in paths of simplicity and frugality.

A week after this I received a note from Caroline which announced her arrival in the city, and I lost no time in waiting on her and receiving her congratulations on my good fortune. Eva and Ida Van Arsdel were prompt in calling upon her, and the three struck up a friendship which grew with that tropical rapidity and luxuriance characteristic of the attachments of women. Ida and Caroline became at once bosom friends.

"I'm so glad," Eva commented to me, "because you and I are together so much now that I was afraid Ida might feel a little out in the cold; I have been her pet and stand-by. The fact is, I'm like that chemical thing that dyers call a mordant—something that has an affinity for two different colors that have no affinity for each other. I'm just enough like mamma and just enough like Ida to hold the two together. They both tell me everything, and neither of them can do without me."

"I can well believe that," said I, "it is an experience in which I sympathize. But I am coming in now, like the third power in a chemical combination, to draw you away from both. I shouldn't think they'd like it."

"Oh, well, it's the way of nature! Mamma left her mother for papa—but Ida!– I'm glad for her to have so nice a friend step in just now—one that has all her peculiar tastes and motives. I wish she could go to Paris and study with Ida when she goes next year. Do you know, Harry, I used to think you were engaged to this cousin of yours? Why weren't you?"

"She never would have had me,—her heart was gone to somebody else."

"Why isn't she married, then?"

"Oh! the course of true love, you know."

"Tell me all about it."

"She never made me her confidant," said I, evasively.

"Tell me who it was, at all events," demanded she.

"Bolton."

"What! that serious, elegant Bolton that you brought to call on us the other night! We all liked him so much! What can be the matter there? Why, I think he's superb and she's just the match for him. What broke it off?"

"You know I told you she never made me her confidant."

"Nor he, either?"

"Well," said I, feeling myself cornered, "I throw myself on your mercy. It's another man's secret, and I ought not to tell you, but if you ask me I certainly shall."

"Right or wrong?"

"Yes, fair Eve, just as Adam ate the apple, so beware!"

"I'm just dying to know, but if you really ought not to tell me I won't tease for it; but I tell you what it is, Harry, if I were you I should bring them together."

"Would you dare take the responsibility of bringing any two together?"

"I suppose I should. I am a daring young woman."

"I have not your courage," said I, "but if it will do you any good to know, Bolton is in a fair way to renew the acquaintance, though he meant not to do it."

"You can tell me how that happened, I suppose?"

"Yes, that is at your service. Simply, the meeting was effected as some others of fateful results have been,—in a New York street-car."

"Aha!" she said, laughing.

"Yes; he was traveling up Sixth Avenue the other night when a drunken conductor was very rude to two ladies. Bolton interfered, made the man behave himself, waited on the ladies across the street to their door as somebody else once did,—when, behold! a veil is raised, the light of the lamp flashes, and one says 'Mr. Bolton!' and the other 'Miss Simmons!' and the romance is opened."

"How perfectly charming! Of course he'll call and see her. He *must*, you know."

"That has proved the case in my experience."

"And all the rest will follow. They are made for each other. Poor Ida, she won't have Caroline to go to Paris with her!"

"No? I think she will. In fact I think it would be the best thing Caroline could do."

"You do! You don't want them to be married?"

"I don't know. I wouldn't say—in fact it's a case I wouldn't for the world decide."

"Oh, heavens! Here's a mystery, an obstacle, an unknown horror, and you can't tell me what it is, and I must not ask. Why, this is perfectly dreadful! It isn't anything against Bolton?"

"Bolton is the man I most love, most respect, most revere," I said.

"What can it be then?"

"Suppose we leave it to fate and the future," said I.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE EXPLOSION.

"HAL! it's too confounded bad!" said Jim Fellows, bursting into my room; "your apple cart's upset for good. The Van Arsdels are blown to thunder. The old one has failed for a million. Gone to smash on that Lightning Railroad, and there you all are! Hang it all, I'm sorry now!"

And to say the truth Jim's face did wear an air of as much concern as his features were capable of. "Seems to me," he added, "you take it coolly."

"The fact is, Jim, I knew all about this the day I proposed. I knew it must come, and I'm glad, since it had to be, to have it over and be done with it. Mr. Van Arsdel told me exactly what to expect when I engaged myself."

"And you and Miss Eva Van Arsdel are going to join hands and play 'Babes in the Woods'?"

"No," said I, "we are going to play the interesting little ballet of 'Man and Wife.' I am to work for her, and all that I win is to be put into her hands."

"Hum! I fancy she'll find things on quite another scale when it comes to your dividends."

"We're not at all afraid of that—you'll see."

"She's a trump—that girl!" said Jim; "now that's what I call the right sort of thing. And there's Alice! Now, I declare it's too confounded rough on Alice! Just as she's come out and such a splendid girl too!"

At this moment the office boy brought up a note.

"From Eva," I said, opening it.

It ran thus:

> "Well, dearest, the storm has burst and nobody is killed yet. Papa told mamma last night, and mamma told us this morning, and we

are all agreed to be brave as possible and make it seem as light as we can to papa. Dear papa! I know it was for us he struggled, it was for us he was anxious, and we'll show him we can do very well. Come down now. Mamma says she feels as if she could trust you as a son. Isn't that kind?
Your own Eva."

"I'm going right down to the house," said I.

"I declare," said Jim, "I want to do something, and one doesn't know what. I say, I'll buy a bouquet for Alice, and you just take it with my compliments." So saying Jim ran down with me, crossed to a florist's cellar, and selected the most extravagant of the floral treasures there.

"Hang it all!" he said, "I wouldn't send her such a one when she was up in the world, but now a fellow wants to do all he can, you know."

"Jim," said I, "you are not a mere smooth-water friend."

"Not I. 'Go for the under dog in the fight' is my principle, so get along with you and stay as long as you like. I can do your book notices; I know just the sort of thing you would say, you know—do 'em up brown, so that you wouldn't know my ideas from your own."

Arrived at the Van Arsdel house, I thought I could see and feel the traces of a crisis, by that mysterious intimation that fills the very air of a place where something has just happened. The elegant colored servant who opened the door wore an aspect of tender regret like an undertaker at a funeral.

"Miss Eva was in her boudoir," he said, "but Miss Alice hadn't come down." I sent up the bouquet with Mr. Fellows' compliments, and made the best of my way to Eva.

She was in the pretty little nook in which we had had our first long talk and which now she called *our* Italy. I found her a little pale and serious, but on the whole in cheerful spirits.

"It's about as bad as it can be," said she. "It seems papa has made himself personally responsible for the Lightning Railroad and borrowed money to put into it, and then there's something or other about the stock he borrowed on running down till it isn't worth anything. I don't understand a word of it, only I know that the upshot of it all is, papa is going to give up all he has and begin over. This house and furniture will be put into a broker's hands and advertised for sale. All the pictures are going to Goupil's sale rooms and will make quite a nice gallery."

"Except yours in this room," said I.

"Ah, well! I thought we should keep these, but I find papa is very sensitive about giving up everything that is really his—and these are his in fact. I bought them with his money. At all events, let them go. We won't care, will we?"

"Not so long as we have each other," said I. "For my part, though I'm sorry for you all, yet I bless the stroke that brings you to me. You see we must make a new home at once, you and I, isn't it so? Now, hear me; let us be married in June, the month of months, and for our wedding journey we'll go up to the mountains and see my mother. It's perfectly lovely up there. Shall it be so?"

"As you will, Harry. And it will be all the better so, because Ida is going to sail for Paris sooner than she anticipated."

"Why does Ida do that?"

"Well, you see, Ida has been the manager of papa's foreign correspondence and written all the letters for three years past, and papa has paid her a large salary, of which she has spent scarcely anything. She has invested it to make her studies with in Paris. She offered this to papa, but he would not take it. He told her it was no more his than the salary of any other of his clerks, and that if she wouldn't make him very unhappy she would take it and go to Paris; and by going immediately she could arrange some of his foreign business. So you see she will stay to see us married and then sail."

"We'll be married in the same church where we put up the Easter crosses," said I.

"How little we dreamed it then," she said, "and that reminds me, sir, where's my glove that you stole on that occasion? You naughty boy, you thought nobody saw you, but somebody did."

"Your glove," said I, "is safe and sound in my reliquary along with sundry other treasures."

"You unprincipled creature! what are they? Confess."

"Well! a handkerchief."

"Wretched man! and besides?"

"Two hair pins, a faded rose, two beads that dropped from your croquet suit, and a sleeve button. Then there is a dry sprig of myrtle that you dropped, on, let me see, the 14th of April, when you were out at the Park in one of those rustic arbors."

"And you were sitting glowering like an owl in an ivy bush. I remember I saw you there."

We both found ourselves laughing very much louder than circumstances seemed really to require, when Eva heard her father's footstep and checked herself.

"There goes poor papa. Isn't it a shame that we laugh? We ought to be sober, now, but for the life of me I can't. I'm one of the imponderable elastic gases; you can't keep me down."

"One may 'as well laugh as cry,' under all circumstances,' said I.

"Better, a dozen times. But seriously and soberly, I believe that even papa, now it's all over, feels relieved. It was while he was struggling, fearing, dreading, afraid to tell us, that he had the worst of it."

"Nothing is ever so bad as one's fears," said I. "There is always some hope even at the bottom of Pandora's box."

"Sententious, Mr. Editor, but true. Now in illustration. Last week Ida and I wrote to the boys at Cambridge all about what we feared was coming, and this very morning we had such nice manly letters from both of them. If we hadn't been in trouble we never should have known half what good fellows they are. Look here," she said, opening a letter, "Tom says, 'Tell father that I can take care of myself. I'm in my senior year and the rest of the course isn't worth waiting for, and I've had an opportunity to pitch in with a surveying party on the Northern Railroad along with my chum. I shall work like sixty, and make myself so essential that they can't do without me. And, you see, the first that will be known of me I shall be one of the leading surveyors of the day. So have no care for me.' And here's a letter from Will which says, 'Why didn't father tell us before? We've spent ever so much more than we needed, but are going about financial retrenchments with a vengeance. Last week I attended the boat race at Worcester and sent an account of it to the *Argus*, written off-hand, just for the fun of it. I got a prompt reply, wanting to engage me to go on a reporting tour of all the great election meetings for them. I'm to have thirty dollars a week and all expenses paid; so you see I step into the press at once. We shall sell our pictures and furniture to some freshies that are coming in, and wind up matters so as not to come on father for anything till he gets past these straits. Tell mother not to worry, she shall be taken care of; she shall have Tom and me both to work for her.'"

"They are splendid fellows!" said I, "and it is worth a crisis to see how well they behave in it. Well, then," I resumed, "our wedding day shall be fixed, say for the 14th of June?"

"How very statistical! I'm sure I can't say, I've got to talk with mamma and all the powers that be, and settle my own head. Don't let's set a day yet; it soils the blue line of the distance— nothing like those pearl tints. Our drawing master used to tell us one definite touch would spoil them."

"For the present, then, it is agreed that we are to be married *generally* in the month of June?" said I.

"P. P.—Providence permitting," said she—"Providence, meaning mamma, Ida, Aunt Maria, and all the rest."

CHAPTER XLII.

THE WEDDING AND THE TALK OVER THE PRAYER-BOOK.

IF novels are to be considered true pictures of real life we must believe that the fall from wealth to poverty is a less serious evil in America than in any other known quarter of the world.

In English novels the failure of a millionaire is represented as bringing results much the same as the commission of an infamous crime. Poor old Mr. Sedley fails and forthwith all his acquaintances cut him; nobody calls on his wife or knows her in the street; the family who have all along been courting his daughter for their son and kissing the ground at her feet, now command the son to break with her, and turn him out of doors for marrying her.

In America it is quite otherwise. A man fails without losing friends, neighbors, and the consideration of society. He moves into a modest house, finds some means of honest livelihood, and everybody calls on his wife as before. Friends and neighbors as they have opportunity are glad to stretch forth a helping hand, and a young fellow who should break his engagement with the daughter at such a crisis would simply be scouted as infamous.

Americans have been called worshipers of the almighty dollar, and they certainly are not backward in that species of devotion, but still these well-known facts show that our worship is not, after all, so absolute as that of other quarters of the world.

Mr. Van Arsdel commanded the respect and sympathy of the influential men of New York. The inflexible honesty and honor with which he gave up all things to his creditors won sympathy, and there was a united effort made to procure for him an appointment in the Custom House, which would give him a comfortable income. In short, by the time that my wedding-day arrived, the family might be held as having fallen from wealth into competence. The splendid establishment on Fifth Avenue was to be sold. It was, in fact, already advertised, and our wedding was to be the last act of the family drama in it. After that we were to go to my mother's, in the mountains of New Hampshire, and Mr. Van Arsdel's family were to spend the summer at the old farm-homestead where his aged parents yet kept house.

Our wedding preparations therefore went forward with a good degree of geniality on the part of the family, and with many demonstrations of sympathy and interest on the part of friends and relations. A genuine love-marriage always and everywhere evokes a sort of instinctive warmth and sympathy. The most worldly are fond of patronizing it as a delightful folly, and as Eva had been one of the most popular girls of her set she was flooded with presents.

And now the day of days was at hand, and for the last time I went up the steps of the Van Arsdel mansion to spend a last evening with Eva Van Arsdel.

She met me at the door of her boudoir: "Harry, here you are! oh, I have no end of things to tell you!—the door bell has been ringing all day, and a perfect storm of presents. We have duplicates of all the things that nobody can do without. I believe we have six pie-knives and four sugar-sifters and three egg-boilers and three china hens to sit on eggs, and a perfect meteoric shower of salt-cellars. I couldn't even count them."

"Oh, well! Salt is the symbol of hospitality," said I, "so we can't have too many."

"And look here, Harry, the wedding-dress has come home. Think of the unheard-of incomprehensible virtue of Tullegig! I don't think she ever had a thing done in time before in her life. Behold now!"

Sure enough! before me, arranged on a chair, was a misty and visionary pageant of vapory tulle and shimmering satin.

"All this is Ida's gift. She insisted that she alone would dress me for my wedding, and poor Tullegig actually has outdone herself and worked over it with tears in her eyes. Good soul! she has a heart behind all her finery, and really seems to take to me especially, perhaps because I've been such a model of patience in waiting at her doors, and never scolded her for any of her tricks. In fact, we girls have been as good as an annuity to Tullegig; no wonder she mourns over us. Do you know, Harry, the poor old thing actually kissed me!"

"I'm not in the least surprised at her wanting that, privilege," said I.

"Well, I felt rather tender toward her. I believe it's Dr. Johnson or somebody else who says there are few things, not purely evil, of which we can say without emotion, 'This is the last!' And Tullegig is by no means a pure evil. This is probably the last of her—with me. But come, you don't say what you think of it. What is it like?"

"Like a vision, like the clouds of morning, like the translation robes of saints, like impossible undreamed mysteries of bliss. I feel as if they might all dissolve away and be gone before to-morrow."

"Oh, shocking, Harry! you mustn't take such indefinite cloudy views of things. You must learn to appreciate details. Open your eyes, and learn now that Tullegig out of special love and grace has adorned my dress with a new style of trimming that not one of the girls has ever had or seen before. It is an original composition of her own. Isn't it blissful, now?"

"Extremely blissful," said I, obediently.

"You don't admire,—you are not half awake."

"I do admire—wonder—adore—anything else that you like—but I can't help feeling that it is all a vision, and that when those cloud wreaths float around you, you will dissolve away and be gone."

"Poh! poh! You will find me very visible and present, as a sharp little thorn in your side. Now, see, here are the slippers!" and therewith she set down before me a pair of pert little delicious white satin absurdities, with high heels and tiny toes, and great bows glistening with bugles.

Nothing fascinates a man like a woman's slipper, from its utter incomprehensibility, its astonishing unlikeness to any article subserving the same purpose for his own sex. Eva's slippers always seemed to have a character of their own,—a prankish elfin grace, and these as they stood there seemed instinct with life as two white kittens just ready for a spring.

I put two fingers into each of the little wretches and made them caper and dance, and we laughed gaily.

"Let me see your boots, Harry?"

"There," said I, putting best foot forward, a brand new pair bought for the occasion. "I am wearing them to get used to them, so as to give my whole mind to the solemn services to-morrow."

"Oh, you enormous creature!" she said, "you are a perfect behemoth. Fancy now my slippers peeping over the table here and wondering at your boots. I can imagine the woman question discussed between the slippers and the boots."

"And I can fancy," said I, "the poor, stumping, well-meaning old boots being utterly perplexed and routed by the elfin slippers. What can poor boots do? They cannot follow them, cannot catch or control them, and if they come down hard on them they ruin them altogether."

"And the good old boots nevertheless," said she, "are worth forty pairs of slippers. They can stamp through wet and mud and rain, and come out afterward good as new; and lift the slippers over impossible places. Dear old patient long-suffering boots, let the slippers respect them! But come, Harry, this is the last evening now, and do you know I've some anxiety about our little programme to-morrow? You were not bred in the Church, and you never were married before, and so you ought to be well up in your part beforehand."

"I confess," said I, "I feel ignorant and a bit nervous."

"Now, I've been a bridesmaid no end of times, and seen all the possibles that may happen under those interesting circumstances, and men are so awkward—their great feet are always sure to step somewhere where they shouldn't, and then they thumb and fumble about the ring, and their gloves always stick to their hands, and it's uncomfortable generally. Now don't, I beg you, disgrace me by any such enormities."

"This is what the slippers say to the boots," said I.

"Exactly. And here is where the boots do well to take a lesson of the slippers. They are 'on their native heath,' here."

"Well, then," said I, "get down the Prayer-book and teach me my proprieties. I will learn my lesson thoroughly."

"Well, now, we have the thing all arranged for tomorrow; the carriages are to be here at ten; ceremony at eleven. The procession will form at the church door; first, Jim Fellows and Alice, then you and mamma, then papa and me, and when we meet at the altar be sure to mind where you step, and don't tread on my veil or any of my tulle clouds, because, though it may look like vapor, you can't very well set your foot through it; and be sure you have a well-disciplined glove that you can slip off without a fuss; and have the ring just where you can lay your hand on it. And now let's read over the service and responses and all that."

We went through them creditably till Eva, putting her finger on one word, looked me straight in the eye.

"*Obey*, Harry, isn't that a droll word between you and me? I can't conceive of it. Now up to this time you have always obeyed me."

"And 'turn about, is fair play,' the proverb says," said I, "you see, Eva, since Adam took the apple from Eve men have obeyed women *nem. con.*—there was no need of putting the 'obey' into their part. The only puzzle is how to constrain the subtle, imponderable, ethereal essence of womanhood under some law; so the *obey* is our helpless attempt."

"But now, really and truly, Harry, I want to talk seriously about this. The girls are so foolish! Jane Seymour said she said 'be gay' instead of 'obey'—and Maria Elmore said she didn't say it at all. But really and truly, that is God's altar—and it is a religious service, and if I go there at all, I must understand what I mean, and say it from my heart."

"My dear, if you have any hesitancy you know that you can leave it out. In various modern wedding services it is often omitted. We could easily avoid it."

"Oh nonsense, Harry! Marry out of the Church! What are you thinking of? Not I, indeed! I shouldn't think myself really married."

"Well, then, my princess, it is your own affair. If you choose to promise to obey me, I can only be grateful for the honor; if it gives any power, it is of your giving, not my seeking."

"But what does a woman promise when she promises at the altar to obey?"

"Well, evidently, she promises to obey her husband in every case where he commands, and a higher duty to God does not forbid."

"But does this mean that all through life in every case where there arises a difference of opinion or taste between a husband and wife she is to give up to him?"

"If," said I, "she has been so unwise as to make this promise to a man without common sense or gentlemanly honor, who chooses to have his own will prevail in all cases of differences of taste, I don't see but she must."

"But between people like you and me, Harry?"

"Between people like you and me, darling, I can't see that the word can make any earthly difference. There can be no obeying where there never is any commanding, and as to commanding you I should as soon think of commanding the sun and moon."

"Well; but you know we shall not always think alike or want the same thing."

"Then we will talk matters over, and the one that gives the best reasons shall prevail. You and I will be like any other two dear friends who agree to carry on any enterprise together, we shall discuss matters, and sometimes one and sometimes the other will prevail."

"But, Harry, this matter puzzles me. Why is there a command in the Bible that wives should always obey? Very many times in domestic affairs, certainly, the woman knows the most and has altogether the best judgment."

"It appears to me that it is one of those very general precepts that require to be largely interpreted by common sense. Taking the whole race of man together, for all stages of society and all degrees of development, I suppose it is the safest general direction for the weaker party. In low stages of society where brute force rules, man has woman wholly in his power, and she can win peace and protection only by submission. But where society rises into those higher forms where husbands and wives are intelligent companions and equals, the direction does no harm, because it confers a prerogative that no cultivated man would think of asserting any more than he would think of using his superior physical strength to enforce it."

"I suppose," said Eva, "it is just like the command that children should obey parents. When children are grown up and married and settled, parents never think of it."

"Precisely," said I, "and you and I are the grown-up children of the Christian era—all that talk of obedience is the old calyx of the perfect flower of love—'when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.'"

"So, then, it appears you and I shall have a free field of discussion, Harry, and may be I shall croquet your ball off the ground sometimes, as I did once before, you know."

"I dare say you will. There was an incipient spice of matrimonial virulence, my fair Eva, in the way you played that game! In fact, I began to hope I was not indifferent to you from the zeal with which you pursued and routed me on that occasion."

"I must confess it did my heart good to set your ball spinning, - and that puts me in mind. I have the greatest piece of news to tell you. If you'll believe me, *Sydney and Sophie are engaged already!* She came here this morning with her present, this lovely amethyst cross—and it seems funny to me, but she is just as dead in love with Sydney as she can be, and do you know he is so delighted with the compliment, that he has informed her that he has made the discovery that he *never was in love before.*"

"The scamp! what does he mean?" said I.

"Oh, he said that little witch Eva Van Arsdel had dazzled him—and he had really supposed himself in love, but that she never had 'excited the profound,' etc., etc., he feels for Sophie."

"So 'all's well that ends well,'" said I.

"And to show his entire pacification toward me," said Eva, "he has sent me this whole set of mantel bronzes—clock, vases, candlesticks, match-box and all. Aren't they superb?"

"Magnificent!" said I. "What an air they will give our room! On the whole, dear, I think rejected lovers are not so bad an article."

"Well, here, I must show you Bolton's present, which came in this afternoon," with which she led me to a pair of elegantly carved book-racks enriched with the complete works of Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, Holmes, and Hawthorne. They were elegantly gotten up in a uniform style of binding.

"Isn't that lovely?" said she, "and so thoughtful! For how many happy hours he has provided here!"

"Good fellow!" said I, feeling the tears start in my eyes. "Eva, if there is a mortal absolutely without selfishness, it is Bolton."

"Oh, Harry, why couldn't he marry and be as happy as we are?"

"Perhaps some day he may," said I, "but, dear me! who gave that comical bronze inkstand? It's enough to make one laugh to look at it."

"Don't you know at once? Why, that's Jim Fellows' present. Isn't it just like him?"

"I might have known it was Jim," said I, "it's so decidedly frisky."

"Well, really, Harry, do you know that I am in deadly fear that that wicked Jim will catch my eye to-morrow in the ceremony or do something to set me off, and I'm always perfectly hysterical when I'm excited, and if I look his way there'll be no hope for me."

"We must trust to Providence," said I; "if I should say a word of remonstrance it would make it ten times worse. The creature is possessed of a frisky spirit and can't help it."

"Alice was lecturing him about it last night, and the only result was we nearly killed ourselves laughing. After all, Harry, who can help liking Jim? Since our troubles he has been the kindest of mortals; so really delicate and thoughtful in his attentions. It was something I shouldn't have expected of him. Harry, what do you think? Should you want Alice to like him, supposing you knew that he would like her? Is there stability enough in him?"

"Jim is a queer fellow," said I. "On a slight view he looks a mere bundle of comicalities and caprices, and he takes a singular delight in shocking respectable prejudices and making himself out worse than he is, or ever thinks of being. But after all, as young men go, Jim is quite free from bad habits. He does not drink, and he doesn't even smoke. He is the most faithful assiduous worker in his line of work among the newspaper-men of New York. He is a good son; a kind brother."

"But, somehow, he doesn't seem to me to have real deep firm principle."

"Jim is a child of modern New York—an *élève* of her school. A good wife and a good home, with good friends, might do much for him, but he will always be one that will act more from kindly impulses than from principle. He will be very apt to go as his friends go."

"You know," she said, "in old times, when Alice was in full career, I never thought of anything serious as possible. It is only since our trouble and his great kindness to us that I have thought of the thing as at all likely."

"We may as well leave it to the good powers," said I, "we can't do much to help or hinder, only, if they should come together I shall be glad for Jim's sake, for I love him. And now, my dear Eva, have you any more orders, counsels, or commands for the fateful to-morrow?" said I; "for it waxes late, and you ought to get a beauty-sleep to-night."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you I'm not going to wear either my new traveling dress or hat, or anything to mark me out as a bride; and look here, Harry, you must try and study the old staid married man's demeanor. Don't let's disgrace ourselves by being discovered at once."

"Shall I turn my back on you and read the newspaper? I observe that some married men do that."

"Yes, and if you could conjugally wipe your boots on my dress, it would have an extremely old married effect. You can read the paper *first*, and then pass it to me—that is another delicate little point."

"I'm afraid that in your zeal you will drive me to excesses of boorishness that will overshoot the mark," said I. "You wouldn't want me to be so negligent of 'that pretty girl,' that some other gentleman would feel a disposition to befriend her?"

"Well, dear, but there's a happy medium. We can appear like two relatives traveling together."

"I am afraid," said I, "after all, we shall be detected; but if we are, we shall be in good company. Our first day's journey lies in the regular bridal route, and I expect that every third or fourth seat will show an enraptured pair, of whom we can take lessons—after all, dear, you know there is no sin in being just married."

"No, only in acting silly about it, as I hope we sha'n't. I want us to be models of rationality and decorum."

Here the clock striking twelve warned me that the last day of Eva Van Arsdel's life was numbered.

CHAPTER XLIII.

BOLTON.

I RETURNED to my room past midnight, excited and wakeful. Seeing a light through the crack of Bolton's door, I went up and knocked and was bidden to enter. I found him seated under his study-lamp, looking over a portfolio of papers, some of which lay strewed around him open. I observed at a glance that the handwriting was that of Caroline. He looked at me. Our eyes met—a slight flush rose in his cheeks as he said:

' I have been looking over a collection of writings belonging to your cousin, the fruits of the solitary years of her secluded life."

"And you find them—?"

"A literary treasure," he said, with emphasis. "Yes," he added, "what there is here will, I think, give her reputation and established position, and a command of prices which will enable her to fulfill her long cherished intention of studying in Paris. She will go out with Miss Ida Van Arsdel, soon after you are gone. I can assure her the means, and I have already procured her the situation of correspondent to the *Chronicle*, with very liberal terms. So you see her way is all plain."

"But what shall we do with the *Ladies' Cabinet?*"

"Oh, we'll manage it among us. Caroline will write for it occasionally."

"*Caroline!*" There was a great deal in the manner in which Bolton spoke that name. It was full of suppressed feeling. Some can express as much intensity of devotion by the mere utterance of a name, as others by the most ardent protestations.

I was in the mood that holds every young man on the eve of a happy marriage. I could conceive of no bliss outside of that; and there was in the sound of Bolton's voice, as he spoke, a vibration of an intense pain which distressed me.

"Bolton," I said, imploringly. "why will you sacrifice yourself and her? She loves you—you love her. Why not another marriage—another home?"

His face quivered a moment, and then settled firmly. He smiled.

"Hal, my boy," he said, "you naturally see nothing for man and woman but marriage just now. But it is not every man and woman who love each other who have the *right* to marry. She does love me," he added, with a deep, inward breathing. "She is capable of all that magnanimity, all that generous self-sacrifice that make women such angels to us ——"

"Then, oh! why not ——?" began I, eagerly.

"*Because* I LOVE her dearly, devotedly, I will not accept such a sacrifice. I will not risk her wrecking her life on me. The pain she feels now in leaving me will soon die out in the enthusiasm of a career. Yes, the day is now come, thank God, when a woman as well as a man can have some other career besides that of the heart. Let her study her profession—expand her mind, broaden her powers—become all that she can be. It will not impede her course to remember that there is in the world one friend who will always love her above all things; and the knowledge that she loves me will save me—if I am salvable."

"*If*—oh, Bolton, my brother! *why* do you say *if*?"

"Because the danger is one I cannot comprehend and provide for. It is like that of sudden insanity. The curse may never return—pray God it may not—but if it should, at least I shall wreck no other heart."

"Bolton, can you say so if there is one that loves you?"

"Not as a wife would love. Her whole being and destiny are not intertwined with mine, as marriage would unite them. Besides, if there is somewhere hid away in my brain and blood the seed of this fatal mania, shall I risk transmitting them to a helpless child? Shall I expose such a woman to the danger of suffering over again, as a mother, the anguish she must suffer as a wife?—the fears, the anxieties, the disappointment, the wearing, wasting pain? As God is my Judge, I will not make another woman suffer what my mother has."

In all my intercourse with Bolton, I never heard him speak of his mother before, and he spoke now with intense vehemence; his voice vibrated and quivered with emotion. In a few moments, however, he resumed his habitual self-possession.

"No, Hal," he said, cheerily; "build no air-castles for me. I shall do well enough; you and yours will be enough to occupy me. And now show me first what I am to do for you while you are gone. Jim and I will trudge to all impossible places, to look you up that little house with a good many large rooms in it, that all young housekeepers are in search of. I will cut out advertisements and look over nice places and let you know the result; and I'll see to the proof-sheets of your articles for the *Milky Way*, and write your contributions to the *Democracy*. If you want to be our special correspondent from the Garden of Eden, why you may send us back letters on your trip. You can tell us if the 'gold of that land' is still 'good,' and if there are there still 'bdellium and onyx stone,' as there were in the Bible days."

"Thank you," said I. "I shall send you letters, but hardly of a kind to appear in the *Democracy*."

"What with your engagements on that sheet, and what I shall have ready to pile in on you by the time you come back, you will have little time for philandering after your return. So take it out now and get all the honey there is in this next moon. For me, I have my domestic joys. Finnette has presented me with a charming batch of kittens. Look here."

And sure enough, snugly ensconced in a large, well-padded basket by the fire, lay madam asleep, with four downy little minikins snuggled to her. Bolton took the lamp and kneeled down to show them, with the most absorbed intent. Stumpy came and stood by the basket, wagging what was left of his poor tail, and looking as if he had some earnest responsibility in the case.

As to Finnette, she opened her yellow eyes, sleepily stretched out her claws, purred and rolled over, as if in excess of pride and joy.

"Who says there isn't happiness on earth?" said Bolton. "A cat is a happiness-producing machine. Hal, I shall save one of those kittens to set you up with. No family is complete without a cat. I shall take one in training for you. You should have a dog, too; but I can't spare Stumpy. I don't believe there is anything like him in the world."

"I verily believe you," said I.

"Stumpy's beauty is so entirely moral that I fear it never would be popularly appreciated; besides, poor brute, he is quite capable of dying for love of me if I gave him up. That's an accomplishment few men attain to. Well, Hal, go to bed now, or you'll be too sleepy to behave respectably to-morrow. God bless you!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE WEDDING JOURNEY.

A WEDDING journey,—what is it? A tour to all the most expensive and fashionable hotels and watering-places. The care of Saratoga trunks and bonnet-boxes. The display of a fashionable wardrobe made purposely for this object, and affording three altogether new and different toilets a day.

Very well.

Doubtless all this may coexist with true love; and true lovers, many and ardent, have been this round, and may again, and been and be none the worse for it. For where true love is, it is not much matter whatever else is or is not.

But when the Saratoga trunks, the three dresses a day, and the display of them to Mrs. Grundy, have been the substitute for love and one of the impelling motives to marriage, or when they absorb all those means and resources on which domestic comfort and peace should be built during the first years of married life, then they are simply in Scriptural phrase "the abomination of desolation, standing where it ought not."

Yet apart from that there is to me a violation of the essential sacredness of the holiest portion of mortal life in exposing it to the glare of everyday observation. It seems as if there were something so wonderful and sacred in that union by which man and woman, forsaking all others, cleave to each other, that its inception requires quiet solitude, the withdrawal from the common-place and bustling ways of ordinary life.

The two, more to each other than all the world besides, are best left to the companionship of nature. Carpets of moss are better than the most elaborate of fashionable hotel furniture; birds and squirrels are more suitable companions than men and women.

Our wedding was a success, so far as cheerfulness and enjoyment were concerned. The church had been garlanded and made fair and sweet by the floral tributes of many friendly hands. Jim Fellows and one or two of the other acquaintances of the family had exerted themselves to produce a very pretty effect. The wedding party was one of relatives and near friends only, without show or parade, but with a great deal of good taste. There was the usual amount of weeping among the elderly female relatives, particularly on the part of Aunt Maria, who insisted on maintaining a purely sepulchral view of our prospects in life.

Ever since the failure of Mr. Van Arsdel, Aunt Maria had worn this aspect, and seemed to consider all demonstrations of lightness of heart and cheerfulness on the part of the family as unsuitable trifling with a dreadful dispensation.

But the presence of this funereal influence could not destroy the gayety of the younger members, and Jim Fellows seemed to exert himself particularly to whip up such a froth and foam of merriment and jollity as caused the day to be remembered as one of the gayest in our annals.

We had but one day's ride in the cars to bring us up to the old simple stage route of the mountain country. During this said day in the cars, under the tutelage of my Empress, I was made to behave myself with the grimmest and most stately reserve of manner. Scarcely was I allowed the same seat with her, and my conversation with her, so far as could be observed, was confined to the most unimpassioned and didactic topics.

The reason for this appeared to be that having married in the very matrimonial month of June, and our track lying along one of the great routes of fashionable travel, we were beset behind and before by enraptured couples, whose amiable artlessness in the display of their emotions appeared particularly shocking to her taste. On the row of seats in front of us could be seen now a masculine head lolling confidentially on a feminine shoulder, and again in the next seat an evident bridal bonnet leaning on the bosom of the beloved waistcoat of its choice in sweet security.

"It is perfectly disgusting and disagreeable," she said in my ear.

"My dear," I replied, "I don't see as we can do anything about it."

"I don't see—I cannot imagine how people can make such a show of themselves," she said.

"Well, you see," said I, "we are all among the *parvenus* of married life. It isn't everybody that knows how to behave as if he had always been rich—let us comfort ourselves with reflections on our own superiority."

The close of the day brought us, however, to the verge of the mountain region where railroads cease and stages begin, —the beautiful country, of hard, flinty, rocky roads, of pines and evergreens, of silvery cascades and brooks of melted crystal, and of a society, as yet homely and heartsome, and with a certain degree of sylvan innocence. At once we seemed to have left the artificial world behind us—the world of observers and observed. We sat together on the top of the stage, and sailed like two birds of the air through the tree-tops of the forest, looking down into all the charming secrets of woodland ways as we went on, and feeling ourselves delivered from all the spells and incantations of artificial life. We might have been two squirrels, or a pair of robins, or blewbirds. We ceased to think how we appeared. We forgot that there were an outer world and spectators, and felt ourselves taken in and made at home in the wide hospitality of nature. Highland, where my mother lived, was just within a day's ride of the finest part of the White Mountains. The close of a charming leisurely drive upward brought us at night to her home, and I saw her sweet face of welcome at the door to meet us, and gave her new daughter to her arms with confident pride.

The village was so calm, and still, and unchanged! The old church where my father had preached, the houses where still lived the people I had known from a boy, the old store, the tavern with its creaking sign-post, and best of all, Uncle Jacob's house, with its recesses and corners full of books, its quiet rooms full of comfort, its traditions of hospitality, and the deep sense of calm and rest that seemed ever brooding there. This was a paradise where I could bring my Eve for rest and for refuge.

What charming days went over our heads there! We rambled like two school-children, hand in hand, over all the haunts of my boyhood. Where I and my little child-wife had gathered golden-hearted lilies, and strawberries, we gathered them again. The same bobolink seemed to sit on the top twig of the old apple tree in the corner of the meadow and say "Chack, chack, chack!" as he said it when Susie and I used to sit with the meadow grass over our heads to watch him while he poured down on us showers of musical snowdrops. It seemed as if I had gone back to boyhood again, so much did my inseparable companion recall to me the child-wife of my early days. We were both such perfect children, living in the enjoyment of the bright present, without a care or a fear for the future.

Every day when we returned from our rambles and excursions the benignant face of my mother shone down on us with fullness of appreciation and joy in our joy; while Uncle Jacob, still dry, quizzical, and active as ever, regarded us with an undisguised complacency.

"You've done the right thing now, Harry," he said to me. "She'll *do*. You're a lucky boy to get such a one, even though she is a city girl."

Eva, after a little experience in mountain climbing, proceeded to equip herself for it with feminine skill. Our village store supplied her with material out of which with wonderful quickness she constructed what she called a mountain suit, somewhat of the bloomer order, but to which she contrived to impart a sort of air of dapper grace and fitness. And once arrayed in this she climbed with me to the most impossible places, and we investigated the innermost mysteries of rock, forest, and cavern.

My uncle lent me his horse and carriage, and with a luncheon-basket well stored by my mother's providing care, we went on a tour of exploration of two or three days into the mountains, in the course of which we made ourselves familiar in a leisurely manner with some of the finest scenery.

The mutual acquaintance that comes to companions in this solitude and face-to-face communion with nature, is deeper and more radical than can come when surrounded by the factitious circumstances of society. When the whole artificial world is withdrawn, and far out of sight, when we are surrounded with the pure and beautiful mysteries of nature. the very best and most genuine part of us comes to the surface, we know each other by the communion of our very highest faculties.

When Eva and I found ourselves alone together in the heart of some primeval forest, where the foot sank ankle-deep in a carpet of more exquisite fabric than any loom of mortal workmanship could create, where the old fallen trunks of trees were all overgrown with this exquisite mossy tapestry, and all around us was a perfect broidery and inlay of flower and leaf, while birds called to us overhead, down through the flickering shadows of the pine boughs, we felt ourselves out of the world and in paradise, and able to look back from its green depths with a dispassionate judgment on the life we had left.

Then, the venture we had made in striking hands with each other to live, not for the pomps and vanities of this world, but for the true realities of the heart, seemed to us the highest reason. Nature smiled on it. Every genuine green thing, every spicy fragrant bush and tree, every warbling bird, true to the laws of its nature, seemed to say to us "Well done."

"I suppose," said Eva, as we sat in one of these mountain recesses whence we could gain a view of the little silvery cascade, "I suppose that there are a great many people who look on me as a proper subject of pity. My father has failed. I have married a man with no fortune, except what he has in himself. We can't afford to spend our honeymoon at Niagara, Saratoga, and the rest of the show places; and we don't contemplate either going to parties or giving them when we go back to New York."

"Poor, poor Eva Van Arsdel! how art thou fallen!" said I.

"Poor Aunt Maria!" said Eva. "I honestly and truly am sorry for her. She really loves me in her way—the way most people love you, which is to want you to be happy in doing as *they* please. Her heart was set on my making an astoundingly rich match, and having a wedding that should eclipse all former weddings, and then becoming a leader of fashionable society; and to have me fail of all this is a dreadful catastrophe. I want somehow to comfort her and make up with her, but she can't forgive me. She kissed me at last with a stern and warning air that seemed to say: 'Well, if you will go to destruction, I can't help it.'"

"Perhaps when she sees how happy we are, she will get over it," said I.

"No, I fear not. Aunt Maria can't conceive of anybody's being happy that has to begin life with an ingrain carpet on the floor. She would think it a positive indecorum to be happy under such circumstances—a want of a proper sense of the fitness of things. Now, I propose to be very happy under precisely those circumstances, and to try to make you so; consequently you see I shall offend her moral sense continuously, and, as I said, I do wish it weren't so, because I love Aunt Maria, and am sorry I can't please her."

"I suppose," said I, "there is no making her comprehend the resources we have in each other—our love of just this bright, free, natural life?"

"Oh dear, no! All Aunt Maria's idea of visiting the mountains would be having rooms at the Profile House in the height of the season, and gazing in full dress at the mountains from the verandahs. I don't think she really cares enough for any thing here to risk wetting her feet for it. I dare say the poor dear soul is lying awake nights now, lamenting over my loss of what I don't care for, and racking her brains how we may contrive to patch up a little decent gentility."

"And you are as free and gay as an oriole!"

"Certainly I am. All I wish is that we could live in one of these little mountain towns, just as your mother and uncle do. I love the hearty, simple society here."

"Well," said I, "as we cannot, we can only try to make a home in New York, as simple-hearted, and kindly, and unworldly as if we lived here."

"Yes, and we can do that," said she. "You have only to resolve to be free, and you are free. Now, that is the beauty of our being married. *Alone,* we are parts of other families, drawn along with them—*entrained,* as the French say: now we are married, we can do as we please; we become king and queen of a new state. In our own house we can have our own ways. We are monarchs of all we survey."

"True," said I, "and a home and a family that has an original and individual life of its own, is always recognized in time as a *fait accompli.* You and I will be for the future 'The Hendersons;' and people will say the Hendersons do this, and that, or the Hendersons don't do the other. They will study us as one studies a new State."

"Yes," said she, taking up my idea in her vivacious way, "and when they have ascertained our latitude and longitude, soil and productions, manners and customs, they can choose whether they like to visit us."

"And you are not in the least afraid of having it said, 'The Hendersons are odd?'" asked I.

"Not a bit of it," replied Eva, "so long as the oddity is some unusual form of comfort. For example, a sitting-room like your uncle's, with its brass andirons and blazing wood-fire, its books and work, its motherly lounges, would be a sort of exotic in New York, where people, as a matter of course, expect a pier-glass and marble slab, a somber concatenation of cord and tassels and damask curtains, and a given number of French chairs and ottomans, veiled with linen covers, and a general funereal darkness of gentility. Now, I propose to introduce the country sitting-room into our New York house. Your mother already has given me her wedding andirons—perfect loves—with shovel and tongs corresponding; and I am going to have a bright, light, free and easy room which the sunshine shall glorify."

"But you know, my love, wood is very dear in New York."

"So are curtains, and ottomans, and mirrors, and marble slabs, and quantities of things which we shall do without. And then, you see, we don't propose to *warm* our house with a wood-fire, but only to adorn it. It is an altar fire that we will kindle every evening, just to light up our room and show it to advantage. How charming every thing looks at your mother's in that time between daylight and dark, when you all sit round the hearth, and the fire lights up the pictures and the books, and makes every thing look so dreamy and beautiful!"

"You are a little poet, my dear; it will be your specialty to turn life into poetry."

"And that is what I call woman's genius. To make life beautiful; to keep down and out of sight the hard, dry, prosaic side, and keep up the poetry—that is my idea of our 'mission.' I think woman ought to be, what Hawthorne calls, 'The Artist of the Beautiful.'"

CHAPTER XLV.

MY WIFE'S WARDROBE.

LET not the reader imagine by the paragraph on Saratoga trunks that my little wife had done what the Scripture assumes is the impossibility for womankind, and as a bride forgotten her attire.

Although possessing ideas of great moderation, she had not come to our mountain home without the appropriate armor of womanhood.

I interpreted the duties of a husband after the directions of Michelet, and was my wife's only maid, and in all humility performed for her the office of packing and unpacking her trunks, and handling all those strange and wonderful mysteries of the toilet, which seemed to my eyes penetrated with an ineffable enchantment.

I have been struck with dismay of late, in reading the treatises of some very clever female reformers concerning the dress of the diviner sex.

It is really in contemplation among them to reduce it to a level as ordinary and prosaic as it occupies among us men, heavy-footed sons of toil? Are sashes and bows, and neck-ribbons and tiny slippers and gloves, to give way to thick-soled boots and buckskin gauntlets and broadcloth coats? To me my wife's wardrobe was a daily poem, and from her use of it I derived the satisfaction of faculties which had lain dormant under my heavy black broadcloth, like the gauzy tissue under the black horn wings of a poor beetle. I never looked at the splendid pictures of Paul Veronese and Titian in the Venetian galleries, without murmuring at the severe edicts of modern life which send every man forth on the tide of life, like a black gondola condemned to one unvarying color. Those gorgeous velvets in all the hues of the rainbow, those dainty laces and splendid gems, which once were allowed to us men, are all swept away, and for us there remains no poetry of dress. Our tailor turns us out a suit in which one is just like another with scarce an individual variation.

The wife, then, the part of one's self which marriage gives us, affords us a gratification of these suppressed faculties. She is our finer self; and in her we appreciate and enjoy what is denied to us. I freely admit the truth of what women-reformers tell us, that it is the admiration of us men that stimulates the love of dress in women. It is a fact—I confess it with tears in my eyes—but it is the truth, that we are blindly enchanted by that play of fancy and poetry in their externals, which is forever denied to us; and that we look with our indulgent eyes even on what the French statesman calls their "*fureurs de toilette.*

In fact, woman's finery never looks to another woman as it does to a man. It has to us a charm, a sacredness, that they cannot comprehend.

Under my wife's instruction I became an expert guardian of these filmy treasures of the wardrobe, and knew how to fold and unfold, and bring her everything in its place, as she daily performed for me the charming work of making up her toilet. To be sure, my slowness and clumsiness brought me many brisk little lectures, but my good will and docility were so great that my small sovereign declared herself on the whole satisfied with my progress. There was a vapory collection apparently made up of bits and ends of rainbows, flosses of clouds, spangles of stars, butterflies and humming bird's wings, which she turned and tossed over daily, with her dainty fingers, selecting a bit here and a morsel there, which went to her hair, or her neck, or her girdle, with a wonderful appropriateness, and in a manner to me wholly incomprehensible; only the result was a new picture every day. This little, artless tableau was expensive neither of time nor money, and the result was a great deal of very honest pleasure to us both. It was her pride to be praised and admired first by me, and then by my mother, and aunt, and Uncle Jacob, who turned her round and admired her, as if she had been some rare tropical flower.

Now, do the very alarmingly rational women-reformers I speak of propose to forbid to women in the future all the use of clothes except that which is best adapted to purposes of work? Is the time at hand when the veil and orange flowers and satin slippers of the bride shall melt away into mist, and shall we behold at the altar the union of young parties, dressed alike in swallow tailed coats and broadcloth pantaloons, with brass buttons?

If this picture seems absurd, then, it must be admitted that there is a reason in nature why the dress of woman should forever remain different from that of man, in the same manner that the hand of her Creator has shaped her delicate limbs and golden hair differently from the rugged organization of man. Woman was meant to be more than a worker; she was meant for the poet and artist of life; she was meant to be the charmer; and that is the reason, dear Miss Minerva, why to the end of time you cannot help it that women always will, and must, give more care and thought to dress than men.

To be sure, this runs into a thousand follies and extravagances; but in this as in everything else the remedy is not extirpation, but direction.

Certainly my pretty wife's pretty toilets had a success in our limited circle, which might possibly have been denied in fashionable society at Saratoga and Newport. She was beauty, color, and life to our little world, and followed by almost adoring eyes wherever she went. It was as real an accession of light and joy to the simple ways of our household to have her there, as a choice picture, or a marvelous strain of music. My wife had to perfection the truly artistic gift of dress. Had she lived in Robinson Crusoe's island with no one to look at her but the paroquets and the monkeys, and with no mirror but a pool of water, she would have made a careful toilet every day, from the mere love of beauty; and it was delightful to see how a fresh, young, charming woman, by this faculty of adornment, seemed to make the whole of the sober, old house like a picture or a poem.

"She is like the blossom on a cactus," said my Uncle Jacob. "We have come to our flower, in her; we have it in us; we all like it, but she brings it out; she is our blossom."

In fact, it was charming to see the delight of the two sober, elderly matrons, my mother and my aunt, in turning over and surveying the pretty things of her toilet. My mother, with all her delicate tastes and love of fineness and exquisiteness, had lived in these respects the self-denied life of a poor country minister, who never has but one "best pocket handkerchief," and whom one pair of gloves must last through a year. It was a fresh little scene of delight to see the two way-worn matrons in the calm, silvery twilight of their old age, sitting like a pair of amicable doves on the trunks in our room, while my wife displayed to them all her little store of fineries, and all three chatted them over with as whole-hearted a zeal as if finery were one of the final ends in creation.

Every morning it was a part of the family breakfast to admire some new device of berries or blossoms adapted to her toilet. Now, it was knots of blue violets, and now clusters of apple blossoms, that seemed to adapt themselves to the purpose, as if they had been made for it. In the same manner she went about the house filling all possible flower vases with quaint and original combinations of leaves and blossoms till the house bloomed like a garland.

Then there were days when I have the vision of my wife in calico dress and crisp white apron, taking lessons in ornamental housewifery of my mother and aunt in the great, clean kitchen. There the three proceeded with all care and solemnity to perform the incantations out of which arose strange savory compounds of cakes and confections, whose recipes were family heir-looms. Out of great platters of egg-whites, whipped into foamy masses, these mystical dainties arose, as of old rose Venus from the foam of the sea.

I observe that the elderly priestesses in the temple of domestic experience, have a peculiar pride and pleasure in the young neophyte that seeks admission to these Eleusinian mysteries.

Eva began to wear an air of precocious matronly gravity, as she held long discourses with my mother and aunt on all the high mysteries of household ways, following them even to the deepest recesses of the house where they displayed to her their hidden treasures of fine linen and napery, and drew forth gifts wherewith to enrich our future home.

In the olden times the family linen of a bride was of her own spinning and that of her mother and kinswomen; so that every thread in it had a sacredness of family life and association. One can fancy dreams of peace could come in a bed, every thread of whose linen has been spun by loving and sainted hands. So, the gift to my wife from my mother was some of this priceless old linen, every piece of which had its story. These towels were spun by a beloved aunt Avis, whose life was a charming story of faith and patience; and those sheets and pillow-cases were the work of my mother's mother; they had been through the history of a family life, and came to us fragrant with rosemary and legend. We touched them with reverence, as the relics of ascended saints.

Then there were the family receipt books, which had a quaint poetry of their own. I must confess, in the face of the modern excellent printed manuals of cookery and housekeeping, a tenderness for these old-fashioned receipt books of our mothers and grandmothers, yellow with age, where in their own handwriting are the records of their attainments and discoveries in the art of making life healthful and charming. There was a loving carefulness about these receipts—an evident breathing of human experience and family life—they were entwined with so many associations of the tastes and habits of individual members of the family, that the reading of my mother's receipt-book seemed to bring back all the old pictures of home-life; and this precious manual she gave to Eva, who forthwith resolved to set up one of her own on the model of it.

In short, by the time our honeymoon had passed, Eva regarded herself as a passed mistress in the grand freemasonry of home life, and assumed toward me those grave little airs of instruction blent with gracious condescension for male inferiority which obtain among good wives. She began to be my little mother no less than wife.

My mother and aunt were confident of her success and abilities as queen in her new dominions. It was evident that though a city girl and a child of wealth and fashion, she had what Yankee matrons are pleased to denominate "faculty," which is, being interpreted, a *genius for home life,* and she was only impatient now to return to her realm and set up her kingdom.

CHAPTER XLVI.

LETTERS FROM NEW YORK.

ABOUT this time we got a very characteristic letter from Jim. Here it is :

Dear Hal :—My head buzzes like a swarm of bees. What haven't I done since you left? The Van Arsdels are all packing up and getting ready to move out, and of course I have been up making myself generally useful there. I have been daily call-boy and page to the adorable Alice. Mem :—*That girl is a brick!* Didn't use to think so, but she's sublime! The way she takes things is so confounded sensible and steady! I respect her—there's not a bit of nonsense about *her* now—you'd better believe. They are all going up to the old paternal farm to spend the summer with his father, and by Fall there'll be an arrangement to give him an income (Van Arsdel I mean), so that they'll have something to go on. They'll take a house somewhere in New York in the Fall and do fairly; but think what a change to Alice!

Oh, by the by, Hal, the Whang Doodle has made her appearance in our parts again. Yesterday as I sat scratching for dear life, our friend 'Dacia sailed in, cock's feathers and all, large as life. She was after money, as usual, but this time it's her *book* she insisted on my subscribing for. She informed me that it was destined to regenerate society, and she wanted five dollars for it. The title is:

THE UNIVERSAL EMPYREAL HARMONIAD,
BEING
An Exposition of the Dual Triplicate
Conglomeration of the Infinite.

There, now, is a book for you.

'Dacia was in high spirits, jaunty as ever, and informed me that the millennium was a-coming straight along, and favored me with her views of how they intended to manage things in the good time.

The great mischief at present, she informs me, lies in *possessive pronouns*, which they intend to abolish. There isn't to be any *my* or *thy*. Everybody is to have everything just the minute they happen to want it, and everybody else is to let 'em. Marriage is an old effete institution, a relic of barbarous ages. There is to be no *my* of husband and wife, and no *my* of children. The State is to raise all the children as they do turnips in great institutions, and they are to belong to everybody. Love, she informed me, in those delightful days is to be free as air; everybody to do exactly as they've a mind to; a privilege she remarked that she took now as her right. "If I see a man that pleases me," said she, "I shall not ask Priest or Levite for leave to have him." This was declared with so martial an air that I shrank a little, but she relieved me by saying, "You needn't be frightened. I don't want *you*. You wouldn't suit me. All I want of you is your money." Whereat she came down to business again.

The book she informed me was every word of it dictated by spirits while she was in the trance state, and was composed conjointly by Socrates, St. Paul, Ching Ling, and Jim Crow, representing different races of the earth and states of progression. From some specimens of the style which she read to me, I was led to hope that we might all live as long as possible, if that sort of thing is what we are coming to after death.

Well, it was all funny and entertaining enough to hear her go on, but when it came to buying the book and planking the V, I flunked. Told 'Dacia I couldn't encourage her in possessive pronouns, that she had no more right to the book than I had, that truth was a universal birthright, and so the truths in that book were mine as much as hers, and as I needed a V more than she did I proposed she should buy the book of me. She didn't see it in that light, and we had high words in consequence, and she poured down on me like a thousand of brick, and so I coolly walked down stairs, telling her when she had done scolding to shut the door.

Isn't she a case? The Dominie was up in his den, and I believe she got at him after I left. How he managed her I don't know. He won't talk about her. The Dominie is working like a Trojan, and his family are doing finely. The kittens are all over his room with as many capers as the fairies, and I hear him laughing all by himself at the way they go on. We have looked at a dozen houses advertised in the paper, but not one yet is the bargain you want; but we trudge on the quest all our exercise-time daily. It will turn up yet, I'm convinced, the very thing you want.

Heigho, Hal, you are a lucky dog. I'm like a lean old nag out on a common, looking over a fence and seeing you in clover up to your hat-band. If my kettle only could boil for two I'd risk about the possessive pronouns. To say the truth I am tired of I and my, and would like to say we and our if I dared.

Come home any way and kindle your tent fire, and let a poor tramp warm himself at it.

Your dog and slave, JIM.

Bolton's letter was as follows:

Dear Hal:—I promised you a family cat, but I am going to do better by you. There is a pair of my kittens that would bring laughter to the cheeks of a dying anchorite. They are just the craziest specimens of pure jollity that flesh, blood, and fur could be wrought into. Who wants a comic opera at a dollar a night when a family cat will supply eight kittens a year? Nobody seems to have found out what kittens are for. I do believe these two kittens of mine would cure the most obstinate hypochondria of mortal man, and, think of it, I am going to give them to you!

Their names are Whisky and Frisky, and their ways are past finding out.

The house in which the golden age pastoral is to be enacted has not yet been found. It is somewhere in fairy land, and will probably suddenly appear to you as things used to, to good knights in enchanted forests.

Jim and I went down to the steamer yesterday to see Miss Van Arsdel and your cousin off for Europe. They are part of a very pleasant party that are going together, and seem in high spirits. I find her articles (your cousin's) take well, and there is an immediate call for more. So far, good! Stay your month out, my boy, and get all you can out of it before you come back to the "dem'd horrid grind" of New York. Ever yours, Bolton.

P. S.—While I have been writing, Whisky and Frisky have pitched into a pile of the proof-sheets of your *Milky Way* story, and performed a ballet dance with them so that they are rather the worse for wear. No fatal harm done, however, and I find it reads capitally. I met Hestermann yesterday quite enthusiastic over one of your articles in the *Democracy* that happened to hit his fancy, and plumed myself to him for having secured you next year for his service. So you see your star is in the ascendant. The Hestermanns are liberal fellows, and the place you have is as sure as the Bank of England. So your pastoral will have a good bit of earthly ground to begin on. B.

The next was from Alice.

Dear Sister:—I am so tired out with packing, and all the thousand and one things that have to be attended to! You know mamma is not strong, and now you and Ida are gone, I am the eldest daughter, and take everything on my shoulders. Aunt Maria comes here daily, looking like a hearse, and I really think she depresses mamma as much by her lugubrious ways as she helps. She positively is a most provoking person. She assumes with such certainty that mamma is a fool, and that all that has happened out of the way comes by some fault of hers, that when she has been here a day mamma is sure to have a headache. But I have discovered faculties and strength I never knew I possessed. I have taken on myself the whole work of separating the things we are to keep from those which are to be sold, and those which we are to take into the country with us, from those which are to be stored in New York for our return. I don't know what I should have done if Jim Fellows hadn't been the real considerate friend he is. Papa is overwhelmed with settling up business matters, and one wants to save him every care, and Jim has really been like a brother—looking up a place to store the goods, finding just the nicest kind of a man to cart them, and actually coming in and packing for me, till I told him I knew he must be giving us time that he wanted for himself—and all this with so much fun and jollification that we really have had some merry times over it, and quite shocked Aunt Maria, who insists on maintaining a general demeanor as if there were a corpse in the house.

One wicked thing about Jim is that he will take her off; and though I scold him for it, between you and me, Eva, and in the "buzzom of the family," as old Mrs. Knabbs used to say, I must admit that it's a little too funny for anything. He can make himself look and speak exactly like her, and breaks out in that way every once in a while; and if we reprove him, says, "What's the matter? Who are you thinking of? I wasn't thinking of what you were." He is a dreadful rogue, and one can't do anything with him; but what we should have done without him, I'm sure I don't know.

Sophie Elmore called the other day, and told me all about things between her and Sydney. She is sending to Paris for all her things, and Tullegig's is all in commotion. They are to be married early in October and go off for a tour in Europe. You ought to see the gloom on Aunt Maria's visage when the thing is talked about. If it had been anybody but the Elmores I think Aunt Maria could have survived it, but they have been her Mordecai in the gate all this time, and now she sees them triumphant. She speaks familiarly about our being ruined, and finally the other day I told her that I found ruin altogether a more comfortable thing than I expected, whereat she looked at me as if I were an abandoned sinner, sighed deeply, and said nothing. Poor soul! I oughtn't to laugh, but she does provoke me so I am tempted to revenge myself in a little quiet fun at her expense.

The other day Jim was telling me about a house he had been looking at. Aunt Maria listened with a severe gravity and interposed with, "Of course nobody could live on that street. Eva would be crazy to think of it. There isn't a good family within squares of that quarter."

I said you didn't care for fashion, and she gave me one of her looks and said, "I trust I sha'n't see Eva in that street; none but most ordinary people live there." Only think, Eva, what if you should live on a street where ordinary people live? How dreadful!

Well, darling, I can't write more; my hands are dusty with packing and overhauling, and I am writing now on the top of a box waiting for the man to cart away the next load. We are all well, and the girls behave charmingly, and are just as handy and helpful as they can be, and mamma says she never knew the comfort of her children before.

God bless you, dear, and good by,

Your loving Sister ALICE.

CHAPTER XLVII.

AUNT MARIA'S DICTUM.

OUR lovely moon of moons had now waned, and the time drew on when, like Adam and Eve, we were hand in hand to turn our backs on Paradise and set our faces toward the battle of life.

"The world was all before us where to choose." In just this crisis we got the following from Aunt Maria:

My Dear Eva:—Notwithstanding all that has passed, I cannot help writing to show that interest in your affairs, which it may be presumed, as your aunt and godmother, I have some right to feel, and though I know that my advice always has been disregarded, still I think it my duty to speak, and shall speak.

Of course, as I have not been consulted or taken into your confidence at all, this may seem like interference, but I overheard Mr. Fellows talking with Alice about looking for houses for you, and I must tell you that I am astonished that you should think of such a thing. Housekeeping is very expensive, if you keep house with the least attention to appearance; and genteel board can be obtained at a far less figure. Then as to your investing the little that your grandmother left you in a house, it is something that shows such childish ignorance as really is pitiable. I don't suppose either you or your husband ever priced an article of furniture at David and Saul's in your lives, and have not the smallest idea of the cost of all those things which a house makes at once indispensable. You fancy a house arranged as you have always seen your father's, and do not know that the kind of marriage you have chosen places all these luxuries wholly out of your reach. Then as to the house itself, the whole of your little property would go but a small way toward giving you a dwelling any way respectable for you to live in.

It is true there are cheap little houses in New York, but where, and on what streets? You would not want to live among mechanics and dentists, small clerks, and people of that description. Everything when one is first married depends on taking a right stand in the beginning. Of course, since the ruin that has come on your father, and with which you will see I never reproach you, though you might have prevented it, it is necessary for all of us to be doubly careful. Everybody is very kind and considerate, and people have called and continue to invite us, and we may maintain our footing as before, if we give our whole mind to it, as evidently it is our duty to do, paying proper attention to appearances. I have partially engaged a place for you, subject of course to your and your husband's approval, at Mivart's, which is a place that can be spoken of—a place where the best sort of people are. Mrs. Mivart is a *protégée* of mine, and is willing to take you at a considerable reduction, if you take a small back room. Thus you will have no cares, and no obligations of hospitality, and be able to turn your resources all to keeping up the proper air and appearances, which with the present shocking prices for everything, silks, gloves, shoes, etc., and the requirements of the times, are something quite frightful to contemplate.

The course of conduct I have indicated seems specially necessary in view of Alice's future. The blight that comes on all her prospects in this dreadful calamity of your father's is something that lies with weight on my mind. A year ago Alice might have commanded the very best of offers, and we had every reason to hope such an establishment for her as her beauty and accomplishments ought to bring. It is a mercy to think that she will still be invited and have her chances, though she will have to struggle with her limited means to keep up a proper style; but with energy and attention it can be done. I have known girls capable of making, in secret, dresses and bonnets that were ascribed to the first artists. The puffed tulle in which Sallie Morton came to your last German was wholly of her own make—although of course this was to a me in confidence by her mother and ought to go no farther. But if you take a mean little house among ordinary low classes, and live in a poor, cheap, and scrubby way, of course you cut yourself off from society, and you see it degrades the whole family. I am sure, as I told your mother, nothing but your inexperience would lead you to think of it, and your husband being a literary man naturally would not understand considerations of this nature. I have seen a good deal of life, and I give it as the result of my observation that there are two things that very materially influence standing in society; the part of the city we live in, and the church we go to. Of course, I presume you will not think of leaving your church, which has in it the most select circles of New York. A wife's religious consolations are things no husband should interfere with, and I trust you will not fling away your money on a mean little house in a fit of childish ignorance. You will want the income of that money for your dress, and carriages for calls and other items essential to keep up life.

I suppose you have heard that the Elmores are making extensive preparations for Sophie's wedding in the Fall. When I see the vanity and instability of earthly riches, I cannot but be glad that there is a better world; the consolations of religion at times are all one has to turn to. Be careful of your health, my dear child, and don't wet your feet. From your letters I should infer that you were needlessly going into very damp unpleasant places. Write me immediately what I am to tell them at Mivart's.

Your affectionate aunt,

MARIA WOUVERMANS.

It was as good as a play to see my wife's face as she read this letter, with flushed cheeks and an impatient tapping of her little foot that foreboded an outburst.

"Just like her for all the world," she said, tossing the letter to me, which I read with vast amusement.

"We'll have a house *of our own* as quick as we can get one," she said. "I think I see myself gossipping in a boarding house, hanging on to the outskirts of fashion in the way she plans, making puffed tulle dresses in secret places and wearing out life to look as if I were as rich as I am not, and trying to keep step with people of five times our income. If you catch Eva Van Arsdel at that game, then tell me!'

"Eva Van Arsdel is a being of the past, fortunately for me, darling."

"Well, Eva Van Arsdel Henderson, then," said she. "That compound personage is stronger and more defiant of worldly nonsense than the old Eva dared to be."

"And I think your aunt has no idea of what there is developing in Alice."

"To be sure she hasn't; not the remotest. Alice is proud and sensible, proud in the proper way I mean. She was full willing to take the goods the gods provided while she had them, but she never will stoop to all the worries, and cares, and little mean artifices of genteel poverty. She never will dress and go out on hunting expeditions to catch a rich husband. I always said Alice's mind lay in two strata, the upper one worldly and ambitious, the second generous and high minded. Our fall from wealth has been like a land slide, the upper stratum has slid off and left the lower. Alice will now show that she is both a strong and noble woman. Our engagement and marriage has wholly converted her, and she has stood by me like a little Trojan all along."

"Well," said I, "about this letter?"

"Oh! you answer it for me. It's time Aunt Maria learned that there is a man to the fore; besides *you* are not vexed, you are only amused, and you can write a diplomatic letter."

"And tell her sweetly and politely, with all ruffles and trimmings, that it is none of her business?" said I

"Yes, just that, but of course with all possible homage of your high consideration. Then tell we can find a house. I suppose we can find nice country board for the hot months near New York, where you can come out every night on the railroad and stay Sundays."

"Exactly. I have the place all thought of and terms arranged long ago. A charming Quaker family where you will find the best of fruit, and the nicest of board, and the quietest and gentlest of hosts, all for a sum quite within our means."

"And then," said she, "by Fall I trust we shall find a house to suit us."

"Certainly," said I. "I have faith that such a house is all waiting for us somewhere in the unknown future. We are traveling toward it, and shall know it when we see it."

"Just think," said my wife, "of Aunt Maria as suggesting that we should board so that we could shirk all obligations of hospitality! What's life good for if you can't have your friends with you, and make people happy under your roof?"

"And who would think of counting the money spent in hospitality?" said I.

"Yet I have heard of people who purposely plan to have no spare room in their house," answered Eva "I remember, now, Aunt Maria's speaking of Mrs. Jacobs with approbation for just this piece of economy."

"By which she secures money for party dresses and a brilliant annual entertainment, I suppose," said I.

"Well," said Eva, "I have always imagined my home with friends in it. A warm peculiar corner for each one of yours and mine. It is the very charm of the prospect when I figure this, that, and the other one enjoying with us, and then I have the great essential of 'help' secured. Do you know that there was one Mary McClellan married from our house years ago who was a perfect adorer at my shrine, and always begged me to be married that she might come and live with me? Now she is a widow with a little girl eight years old, and it is the desire of her heart to get a place where she can have her child with her. It will fit exactly. The little cub, under my training, can wait on the table and tend the door, and Mary will be meanwhile a mother to me in my inexperience."

"Capital!" said I. "I am sure our star is in the ascendant, and we shall hear from our house before the summer is through."

One day, near the first of October, while up for a Sunday at our country boarding-place, I got the following letter from Jim Fellows:

My Dear Old Boy:—I think we have got it. I mean got the house. I am not quite sure what your wife will say, but I happened to meet Miss Alice last night and I told her, and she says she is sure it will do. Hear and understand.

Coming down town yesterday I bought the *Herald* and read to my joy that Jack Fergus had been appointed Consul to Algiers. To say the truth we fellows have thought the game was pretty much up with poor Jack; his throat and lungs are so bad, and his family consumptive. So I said when I read it, "Good! there's a thing that'll do." I went right round to congratulate him and found three or four of our fellows doing the same thing. Jack was pleased, said it was all right, but still I could see there was a hitch somewhere, and that in fact it was not all right, and when the other fellows went away I stayed, and then it came out. He said at once that he was glad of the appointment, but that he had no money; the place at Algiers does not support a man. He will have to give up his bank salary, and unless he could sell his house for ready money he could do nothing. I never knew he had any house. Heaven knows none of the rest of us have got any houses. But it seems some aunt of his, an old Knickerbocker, left him one. Well, I asked him why he didn't sell it. He said he couldn't. He had had two agents there that morning. They wouldn't give him any encouragement till the whole place was sold together. They wouldn't offer anything, and would only say they would advertise it on his account. You see it is one of those betwixt and between places which is going to be a business place, but isn't yet. So he said; and it was that which made me think of you and your wife.

I asked where it was, and he told me. It is one of those little streets that lead out of Varick street, if you know where that is; I'll bet Mrs. Henderson a dozen pair that she doesn't. Well, I went with him to see it when the bank closed, for I still thought of you. By George, I think you will like it. It is the last house in a block, the street is dull enough but is inhabited by decent quiet people, who mind their own business. Of course the respectable Mrs. Wovermans would think it an unknown horror to live there; and be quite sure they were all Jews or sorcerers, or some other sort of come-outers. Well, this house itself is not like the rest of the block—having been built by this old Aunt Martila, or Van Beest, or whatever else her name was, for her own use. It is a brick house, with a queer stoop, two and a half stories high (the house, not the stoop), with a bay-window on the end, going out on a sort of a church-yard, across which you look to what is, I believe, St. John's Park*—a place with trees, and English sparrows, and bird-houses and things. Jack and his wife have made the place look quite cosy, and managed to get a deal of comfort out of it. I wish I could buy it and take my wife there if only I had one. This place Jack will sell for eight thousand dollars—four thousand down and four thousand on mortgage. I call that dirt cheap, and Livingstone, our head book-keeper, who used to be a house-broker, tells me it is a bargain such as he never heard of, and that you can sell it at any time for more than that. I have taken the refusal for three days, so come down, both of you, bright and early Monday and look at it."

So down we came; we saw; we bought. In a few days we were ready, key in hand, to open and walk into "Our House."

---

* It *was*; but alas! since the recent time of this story, insatiate commerce has taken the old Park and built therein a huge railway freight depot.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

OUR HOUSE.

THERE are certain characteristic words which the human heart loves to conjure with, and one of the strongest among them is the phrase, "Our house." It is not my house, nor your house, nor their house, but *Our House.* It is the inseparable *we* who own it, and it is the *we* and the *our* that go a long way towards impregnating it with the charm that makes it the symbol of things most blessed and eternal.

Houses have their physiognomy, as much as persons. There are common-place houses, suggestive houses, attractive houses, mysterious houses, and fascinating houses, just as there are all these classes of persons. There are houses whose windows seem to yawn idly—to stare vacantly—there are houses whose windows glower weirdly, and look at you askance; there are houses, again, whose very doors and windows seem wide open with frank cordiality, which seem to stretch their arms to embrace you, and woo you kindly to come and possess them.

My wife and I, as we put our key into the door and let ourselves into the deserted dwelling, now all our own, said to each other at once that it was a home-like house. It was built in the old style, when they had solid timbers and low ceilings, with great beams and large windows, with old-fashioned small panes of glass, but there was about it a sort of homely individuality, and suggestive of cosy comforts. The front room had an ancient fire-place, with quaint Dutch tiles around it. The Ferguses had introduced a furnace, gas, and water, into it; but the fire-place in most of the rooms still remained, suggestive of the old days in New York when wood was plenty and cheap. One could almost fancy that those days of roaring family hearths had so heartened up the old chimneys that a portion of the ancient warmth yet inhered in the house.

"There, Harry," said my wife, exultantly pointing to the fire-place, "see, this is the very thing that your mother's brass andirons will fit into—how charmingly they will go with it!"

And then those bright, sunny windows, and that bay-window looking across upon those trees was perfectly lovely. In fact, the leaves of the trees shimmering in October light, cast reflections into the room suggestive of country life, which, fresh from the country as we were, was an added charm.

The rooms were very low studded, scarcely nine feet in height—and, by the by, I believe that that feature in old English and Dutch house-building is one that greatly conduces to give an air of comfort. A low ceiling insures ease in warming, and in our climate, where one has to depend on fires for nine months in the year, this is something worth while. In general, I have noticed in rooms that the sense of snugness and comfort dies out as the ceiling rises in height—rooms twelve and fifteen feet high may be all very grand and very fine, but they are never sociable, they never seem to brood over you, soothe you, and take you to their heart as the motherly low-browed room does.

My wife ran all over her new dominions—exploring and planning, telling me volubly how she would arrange them. The woman was Queen here; her foot was on her native heath, and she saw capabilities and possibilities with the eye of an artist.

Now, I desire it to be understood that I am not indifferent to the charms of going to housekeeping full-handed. I do not pretend to say that my wife and I should not have enjoyed opening our family reign in a stone palace, overlooking New York Central Park, with all the charms of city and country life united, with all the upholsterers and furniture shops in New York at our feet. All this was none too good for our taste if we could have had it, but since we could not have it, we took another kind of delight, and one quite as vivid, in seeing how charmingly we could get on without it. In fact, I think there is an exultation in the constant victory over circumstances, in little inventions, substitutions, and combinations, rendered necessary by limited means, which is wanting to those to whose hand everything comes without an effort.

If, for example, the brisk pair of robins, who have built in the elm tree opposite to our bay-window, had had a nest all made, and lined, and provided for them to go into, what an amount of tweedle and chipper, what a quantity of fluttering, and soaring, and singing would have been wanting to the commencement of their housekeeping! All those pretty little conversations with the sticks and straw, all that brave work in tugging at a bit of twine and thread, which finally are carried off in triumph and wrought into the nest, would be a loss in nature. How much adventure and enterprise, how many little heart-beats of joy go into one robin's nest simply because Mother Nature makes them work it out for themselves!

We spent a cheerful morning merely in running over our house, and telling each other what we could do with it, and congratulating each other that it was "such a bargain," for, look, here is an outlook upon trees; and here is a little back yard, considerably larger than a good sized pocket-handkerchief, where Mrs. Fergus had raised mignonette, heliotropes, and roses and geraniums enough to have a fresh morning bouquet of them daily; and an ancient grape-vine planted by some old Knickerbocker, which Jack Fergus had trained in a sort of arbor over the dining-room window, and which at this present moment was hanging with purple clusters of grapes. We ate of them, and felt like Adam and Eve in Paradise. What was it to us that this little

Eden of ours was in an unfashionable quarter, and that, as Aunt Maria would say, there was not a creature living within miles of us, it was still our mystical "garden which the Lord God had planted eastward in Eden." The purchase of it, it is true, had absorbed all my wife's little fortune, and laid a debt upon us—but we told each other that it was, after all, our cheapest way of renting a foothold in New York. "For, you see," said my wife instructively, "papa says it is a *safe* investment, as it is sure to rise in value, so that even if we want to sell it we can get more than we paid."

"What a shrewd little trader you are getting to be!" I said, admiring this profound financial view.

"Oh, indeed I am; and, now, Harry dear, don't let's go to any expense about furniture till I've shown you what I intend to do. I know devices for giving a room an air with so little; for example, look at this recess. I shall fill this up with a divan that I shall get up for nine or ten dollars."

"You get it up!"

"Yes, I—with Mary to help me—you'll see in time. We'll have all the comfort that could be got out of a sofa, for which people pay eighty or ninety dollars, and the eighty or ninety dollars will go to get other things, you see. And then we must have a stuffed seat running round this bay-window. I can get that up. I've seen at Stewart's such a lovely piece of patch, with broad crimson stripes, and a sort of mauresque figure interposed. I think we had better get the whole of it, and that will do for one whole room. Let's see. I shall make lambrequins for the windows, and cover the window-seats, and then we shall have only to buy two or three great stuffed chairs and cover them with the same. Oh, you'll see what I'll do. I shall make this house so comfortable and charming that people will wonder to see it."

"Well, darling, I give all that up to you, that is your dominion, your reign."

"To be sure, you have all your work up at the office there, and your articles to write, and besides, dear, with all your genius, and all that, you really don't know much about this sort of thing, so give yourself no trouble, I'll attend to it—it is my ground, you know. Now, I don't mean mother or Aunt Maria shall come down here till we have got every thing arranged. Alice is going to come and stay with me and help, and when I want you I'll call on you, for, though I am not a writing genius, I am a genius in these matters, as you'll see."

"You are a veritable household fairy," said I, "and this house, henceforth, lies on the borders of the fairy land. Troops of gay and joyous spirits are flocking to take possession of it, and their little hands will carry forward what you begin."

CHAPTER XLIX.

PICNICKING IN NEW YORK.

OUR house seemed so far to be ours that it was apparently regarded by the firm of good fellows as much their affair as mine. The visits of Jim and Bolton to our quarters were daily, and sometimes even hourly. They counseled, advised, theorised, and admired my wife's generalship in an artless solidarity with myself. Jim was omnipresent. Now he would be seen in his shirt-sleeves nailing down a carpet, or unpacking a barrel, and again making good the time lost in these operations by scribbling his articles on the top of some packing-box, dodging in and out at all hours with news of discoveries of possible bargains that he had hit upon in his rambles.

For a while we merely bivouacked in the house, as of old the pilgrims in a caravansary, or as a picnic party might do, out under a tree. The house itself was in a state of growth and construction, and, meanwhile, the work of eating and drinking was performed in moments snatched in the most pastoral freedom and simplicity. I must confess that there was a joyous, rollicking freedom about these times that was lost in the precision of regular housekeepers. When we all gathered about Mary's cooking-stove in the kitchen, eating roast oysters and bread and butter, without troubling ourselves about table equipage, we seemed to come closer to each other than we could in months of orderly housekeeping.

Our cooking-stove was Bolton's especial protégé and pet.

He had studied the subject of stoves, for our sakes, with praiseworthy perseverance, and after philosophic investigation had persuaded us to buy this one, and of course had a fatherly interest in its well-doing. I have the image of him now as he sat, seriously, with the book of directions in his hand, reading and explaining to us all, while a set of muffins were going through the "*experimentum crucis*"—the oven. The muffins were excellent and we ate them hot out of the oven with gladness and singleness of heart, and agreed that we had touched the absolute in the matter of cooking-stoves. All my wife's plans and achievements, all her bargains and successes, were reported and admired in full conclave, when we all looked in at night, and took our snack together in the kitchen.

One of my wife's enterprises was the regeneration of the dining-room. It had a pretty window draped pleasantly by the grape-vine, but it had a dreadfully common wall-paper, a paper that evidently had been chosen for no other reason than because it was cheap. It had moreover a wainscot of dark wood running round the side, so that what with our low ceiling, the portion covered by this offending paper was only four feet and a half wide.

I confess, in the multitude of things on hand in the work of reconstruction, I was rather disposed to put up with the old paper as the best under the circumstances.

"My dear," said I, "why not let pretty well alone?"

"My darling child!" said my wife, "it is impossible—that paper is a horror."

"It certainly isn't pretty, but who cares?" said I. "I don't see so very much the matter with it, and you are undertaking so much that you'll be worn out."

"It will wear me out to have that paper, so now, Harry dear, be a good boy, and do just what I tell you. Go to Berthold & Capstick's and bring me one roll of plain black paper, and six or eight of plain crimson, and wait then to see what I'll do."

The result on a certain day after was that I found my dining-room transformed into a Pompeiian saloon, by the busy fingers of the house fairies.

The ground-work was crimson, but there was a series of black panels, in each of which was one of those floating Pompeiian figures, which the Italian traveler buys for a trifle in Naples.

"There now," said my wife, "do you remember my portfolio of cheap Neapolitan prints? Haven't I made good use of them?"

"You are a witch," said I. "You certainly can't paper walls."

"Can't I! haven't I as many fingers as your mother? and she has done it time and again; and this is such a crumb of a wall. Alice and Jim and I did it to-day, and have had real fun over it."

"Jim?" said I, looking amused.

"Jim!" said my wife, nodding with a significant laugh.

"Seems to me," said I.

"So it seems to me," said she. After a pause she added, with a smile, "but the creature is both entertaining and useful. We have had the greatest kind of a frolic over this wall."

"But, really," said I, "this case of Jim and Alice is getting serious."

"Don't say a word," said my wife, laughing. "They are in the F's; they have got out of Flirtation and into Friendship."

"And friendship between a girl like Alice and a young man, on his part soon gets to mean ——."

"Oh, well, let it get to mean what it will," said my wife; "they are having nice times now, and the best of it is, nobody sees anything but you and I. Nobody bothers Alice, or asks her if she is engaged, and she is careful to inform me that she regards Jim quite as a brother. You see that is one advantage of our living where nobody knows us—we can all do just as we like. This little house is Robinson Crusoe's island—in the middle of New York. But now, Harry, there is one thing you must do toward this room. There must be a little gilt molding to finish off the top and sides. You just go to Berthold & Capstick's and get it. See, here are the figures," she said, showing her memorandum-book. "We shall want just that much."

"But, can we put it up?"

"No, but you just speak to little Tim Brady, who is a clerk there—Tim used to be a boy in father's office—he will like nothing better than to come and put it up for us, and then we shall be fine as a new fiddle."

And so, while I was driving under a great pressure of business at the office daily, my home was growing leaf by leaf, and unfolding flower by flower, under the creative hands of my home-queen and sovereign lady.

Time would fail me to relate the enterprises conceived, carried out, and prosperously finished under her hands. Indeed I came to have such a reverential belief in her power that had she announced that she intended to take my house up bodily and set it down in Japan, in the true 'Arabian Nights" style, I should not in the least have doubted her ability to do it. The house was as much an expression of my wife's personality, a thing wrought out of her being, as any picture painted by an artist.

Many homes have no personality. They are made by the upholsterers; the things in them express the tastes of David and Saul, or Berthold & Capstick, or whoever else of artificers undertake the getting up of houses. But our house formed itself around my wife like the pearly shell around the nautilus. My home was Eva,—she the scheming, the busy, the creative, was the life, soul, and spirit of all that was there.

Is not this a species of high art, by which a house, in itself cold and barren, becomes in every part warm and inviting, glowing with suggestion, alive with human tastes and personalities? Wall-paper, paint, furniture, pictures, in the hands of the home artist, are like the tubes of paint out of which arises, as by inspiration, a picture. It is the woman who combines them into the wonderful creation which we call a home.

When I came home from my office night after night, and was led in triumph by Eva to view the result of her achievements, I confess I began to remember with approbation the old Greek mythology, and no longer to wonder that divine honors had been paid to household goddesses.

It seemed to me that she had a portion of the talent of creating out of nothing. Our house had literally nothing in it of the stereotyped sets of articles expected as a matter of course in good families, and yet it looked cosy, comfortable, inviting, and with everywhere a suggestion of ideal tastes, and an eye to beauty. There were chambers which seemed to be built out of drapery and muslins, every detail of which, when explained, was a marvel of results at small expense. My wife had an aptitude for bargains, and when a certain article was wanted, supplied it from some second-hand store with such an admirable adaptation to the place that it was difficult to persuade ourselves after a few days that it had not always been exactly there, where now it was so perfectly adapted to be.

In fact, her excursions into the great sea of New York and the spoils she brought thence to enrich our bower reminded me of the process by which Robinson Crusoe furnished his island home by repeated visits to the old ship which was going to wreck on the shore. From the wreck of other homes came floating to ours household belongings, which we landed reverently and baptized into the fellowship of our own.

CHAPTER L.

NEIGHBORS.

"DO you know, Harry," said my wife to me, one evening when I came home to dinner, "I have made a discovery?"

Now, the truth was, that my wife was one of those lively, busy, active, enterprising little women, who are always making incident for themselves and their friends; and it was a regular part of my anticipation, as I plodded home from my office, tired and work-worn, to conjecture what new thing Eva would find to tell me that night. What had she done, or altered, or made up, or arranged, as she always met me full of her subject?

"Well," said I, "what is this great discovery?"

"My dear, I'll tell you. One of those dumb houses in our neighborhood has suddenly become alive to me. I've made an acquaintance."

Now, I knew that my wife was just that social, conversing, conversable creature that, had she been in Robinson Crusoe's island, would have struck up confidential relations with the monkeys and paroquets, rather than not have somebody to talk to. Therefore, I was not in the least surprised, but quite amused, to find that she had begun neighboring in our vicinity.

"You don't tell me," said I, "that you have begun to cultivate acquaintances on this street, so far from the centers of fashion?"

"Well, I have, and found quite a treasure, in at the very next door."

"And pray now, for curiosity's sake, how did you manage it?"

"Well, to tell the truth, Harry, I'm the worst person in the world for keeping up what's called select society; and I never could bear the feeling of not knowing anything about anybody that lives next to me. Why, suppose we should be sick in the night, or anything happen, and we not have a creature to speak to! It seems dreary to think of it. So I was curious to know who lived next door; and I looked down from our chamber-window into the next back-yard, and saw that whoever it was had a right cunning little garden, with nasturtiums and geraniums, and chrysanthemums, and all sorts of pretty things. Well, this morning I saw the sweetest little dove of a Quaker woman, in a gray dress, with a pressed crape cap, moving about as quiet as a chip sparrow among the flowers. And I took quite a fancy to her, and began to think how I should make her acquaintance."

"If that isn't just like you!" said I. "Well, did you run in and fall on her neck?"

"Not exactly. But, you see, we had all our windows open to air the rooms, and my very best pocket handkerchief lay on the bureau. And the wind took it up, and whirled it about, and finally carried it down into that back-yard; and it lit on her geranium bush. 'There, now,' said I to Alice, 'there's a providential opening. I'm just going to run right down and inquire about my pocket handkerchief.' Which I did: I just stepped off from our stoop on to her door-step, and rang the bell. Meanwhile, I saw, on a nice, shining door plate, that the name was Baxter. Well, who should open the door but the brown dove in person, looking just as pretty as a pink in her cap and drab gown. I declare, Harry, I told Alice I'd a great mind to adopt the Quaker costume right away. It's a great deal more becoming than all our finery."

"Well, my dear," said I, "that introduces a large subject; and I want to hear what came next."

"Oh, well, I spoke up, and said, 'Dear Mrs. Baxter, pray excuse me; but I've been so very careless as to lose my handkerchief down in your back-yard.' You ought to have seen the pretty pink color rise in her cheeks; and she said in such a cunning way, 'I'll get it for thee!'

"'Oh, dear, no,' said I, 'don't trouble yourself. Please let me go out into your pretty little garden there.'"

"Well, the upshot was, we went into the garden and had a long chat about the flowers. And she picked me quite a bouquet of geraniums. And then I told her all about our little garden, and how I wanted to make things grow in it, and didn't know how; and asked her if she wouldn't teach me. Well, then, she took me into the nicest little drab nest of a parlor that ever you saw. The carpet was drab, and the curtains were drab, and the sofas and chairs were all covered with drab; but the windows were perfectly blazing with flowers. She had most gorgeous nasturtium vines trained all around the windows, and scarlet geraniums that would really make your eyes wink to look at them. I could't help laughing a little to myself, that they make it a part of their religion not to have any color, and then fall back upon all these high-colored operations of the Lord by way of brightening up their houses. However, I got a great deal of instruction out of her, and she's going to come in and show me how to arrange my ferns and other things I gathered in the country, in a Ward's case; and she's going to show me, too, how to plant an ivy, so as to have it grow all around this bay-window. The inside of hers is a perfect bower."

"I perceive," said I, "the result of all was that you swore eternal friendship on the spot, just like the Eva that you are."

"Precisely."

"And you didn't have the fear of your gentility before your eyes?"

"Not a bit. I always have detested gentility."

"You don't even know the business of her husband."

"But I do, though. He's a watchmaker, and works for Tiffany & Co. I know, because she showed me a curious little clock of his construction; and these things came out in a parenthesis, you see."

"I see the hopeless degradation which this will imply in Aunt Maria's eyes," said I.

"A fig for Aunt Maria, and a fig for the world! I'm married now, and can do as I've a mind to. Besides, you know Quakers are not world's people. They have come out from it, and don't belong to it. There's something really refreshing about this dear little body, with her thee's' and her 'thou's' and her nice little ways. And they're young married people, just like us. She's been in this house only a year. But, Harry, she knows everybody on the street,—not in a worldly way, but in the way of her sect. She's made a visitation of Christian love to every one of them. Now, isn't that pretty? She's been to see what she could do for them, and to offer friendship and kind offices. Isn't that sort of Arcadian, now?"

"Well, and what does she tell you?"

"Oh, there are a great many interesting people on this street. I can't tell you all about it now, but some that I think we must try to get acquainted with. In the third story of that house opposite to us is a poor French gentleman, who came to New York a political refugee, hoping to give lessons; but has no faculty for getting along, and his wife, a delicate little woman with a baby, and they're very, very poor. I'm going with her to visit them some time this week. It seems this dear little Ruth was with her when her baby was born,—this dear little Ruth! It struck me so curiously to see how interesting she thinks everybody on this street is."

"Simply," said I, "because she looks at them from the Christian stand-point. Well, dear, I can't but think your new acquaintance is an acquisition."

"And only think, Harry, this nice little person is one of the people that Aunt Maria calls nobody; not rich, not fashionable, not of the world, in short; but just as sweet and lovely and refined as she can be. I think those plain, sincere manners are so charming. It makes you feel so very near to people to have them call you by your Christian name right away. She calls me Eva and I call her Ruth; and I feel somehow as if I must always have known her."

"I want to see her," said I.

"You must. It'll amuse you to have her look at you with her grave, quiet eyes, and call you Harry Henderson. What an effect it has to hear one's simple, common name, without fuss or title!"

"Yes," said I, "I remember how long I called you Eva in my heart, while I was addressing you at arm's length as Miss Van Arsdel."

"It was in the Park, Harry, that we lost the Mr. and Miss, never to find them again."

"I've often thought it strange," said I, "how these unworldly modes of speaking among the Quakers seem to have with them a certain dignity. It would be an offense, a piece of vulgar forwardness, in most people to address you by your Christian name. But, with them it seems to be an attempt at realizing a certain ideal of Christian simplicity and sincerity, which one almost loses sight of in the conventional course of life."

"I was very much amused," said my wife, "at her telling me of one of her visits of Christian love to a Jew family, living on this street. And really, Harry, she has learned an amount of good about the Jews, from cultivating an intimacy with this family, that is quite astonishing. I'd no idea how good the Jews were."

"Well, my little High-Church darling," said I, "you're in a fair way to become ultra-liberal, and to find that what you call *the* Church doesn't come anywhere near representing the whole multitude of the elect in this world. I comfort myself with thinking, all the time, how much more good there is in the world and in human nature than appears on the surface."

"And, now, Harry, that you and I have this home of our own, we can do some of those things with it that our friends next door seem to be doing. I thought we might stir about and see if we couldn't get up a class for this poor Frenchman, and I'm going to call on his wife. In fact, Harry, I've been thinking that it must be one's own fault if one has no friends in one's neighborhood. I can't believe in living on a street, and never knowing or caring whether your next-door neighbor is sick or dead, simply because you belong to a circle up at the other end of the city."

"Well, dear, you know that I am a democrat by nature. But I am delighted to have you make these discoveries for yourself. It was bad enough, in the view of your friends, I presume, for me to have come between you and a fashionable establishment, and a palace on the Park, without being guilty of introducing you into such very mixed society as the course that you're falling into seems to promise. But wherever you go I'll follow."

CHAPTER LI.

MY WIFE PROJECTS HOSPITALITIES.

"MY dear," said my wife to me at breakfast, "our house is about done. To be sure there are ever so many little niceties that I haven't got at yet, but it's pretty enough now. So that I'm not at all ashamed to show it to mamma or Aunt Maria, or any of them."

"Do you think," said I, "that last-named respectable individual could possibly think of countenancing us, when we have only an ingrain carpet on our parlor and nothing but mattings on the chambers, and live down here where nobody lives?"

"Well, poor soul!" said Eva, "she'll have to accept it as one of the trials of life, and have recourse to the consolations of religion. Then, after all, Harry, I really am proud of our parlor. Of course, we've had the good luck to have a good many handsome ornaments given to us; so that, though we haven't the regulation things that people generally get, it does look very bright and pretty."

"It's perfectly lovely," said I. "Our house to me is a perfect dream of loveliness. I think of it all day from time to time when I'm at work in my office, and am always wanting to come home and see it again, and have a little curiosity to know what new thing you've accomplished. So far, your career has been a daily succession of triumphs, and the best of it is that it's all so much like you."

"So," said she, "that I can't be jealous at your loving the house so much. I suppose you think it as much a part of me as the shell on a turtle's back. Well, now, before we invite mother and Aunt Maria, and all the folks down here, I propose that we have just a nice little housewarming, with our own little private particular set, who know how to appreciate us."

"Agreed!" said I; "Bolton, and Jim, and Alice, and you and I will have a commemoration-dinner together. Our fellows, you see, seem to feel as much interested in this house as if it were their own."

"I know it," said she. "Isn't it really amusing to see the grandfatherly concern that Bolton has for our cooking-stove?"

"Oh! Bolton has staked his character on that stove," I said. "Its success is quite a personal matter now."

"Well, it does bake admirably," said my wife, "and I think our dinner will be a perfect success, so far as that is concerned. And, do you know, I'm going to introduce that new way of doing up cold chicken which I've invented."

"Yes," said I, "we shall christen it Chicken *à la Eva*."

"And I've been talking with our Mary about it, and she's quite in the spirit of the affair. You see, like all Irish women, Mary perfectly worships the boys, and thinks there never was anybody like Mr. Bolton, and Mr. Jim; and of course it's quite a labor of love with her. Then I've been giving her little cub there a series of lessons to enable her to wait on table; and she is all exercised with the prospect."

"Why," said I, "the little flibberty-gibbet is hardly as high as the table."

"Oh, never say that before her. She feels very high indeed in the world, and is impressed with the awful gravity and responsibility of being eight years old. I have made her a white apron with pockets, in which her soul delights; and her mother has starched and ironed it till it shines with whiteness. And she is learning to brush the table-cloth, and change plates in the most charming way, and with a gravity that is quite overcoming."

"Capital!" said I. "And when shall it be?"

"To-morrow night."

"Agreed! I'll tell the fellows this is to be a regular blow-out, and we must do our very prettiest, which is very pretty indeed," said I, "thanks to the contributions of our numerous friends. For my part, I think the fashion of wedding-presents has proved a lucky thing for us."

"Even if we have six pie-knives, and no pie to eat with them," said my wife, "as may happen in our establishment pretty often."

"Still," said I, "among them all there are a sufficiency of articles that give quite another aspect to our prudent little house from what it would wear if we were obliged to buy everything ourselves."

"Yes," said my wife, "and one such present as that set of bronzes on the mantel piece gives an air to a whole room. A mantelpiece is like a lady's bonnet. It's the headpiece of a room, and if that be pleasing the rest is a good deal taken for granted. Then, you see, our parlor is all of a warm color,—crimson carpet, crimson curtains,—everything warm and glowing. And so long as you have the color it isn't a bit of matter whether your carpet cost three dollars and a half a yard or eighty-seven cents, and whether your curtains are damask or Turkey red. Color is color, and will produce its effects, no matter in what material."

"And we men," said I, "never know what the material is, if only the effect is pleasant. I always look at a room as a painting. It never occurs to me whether the articles in it are cheap or dear, so that only the general effect is warm, and social, and agreeable. And that is just what you have made these rooms. I think the general effect of the rooms, either by daylight, or lamp-light, or firelight, would be to make a person like to stay in them, and when he had left them want to come back."

"Yes," said my wife, "I flatter myself our rooms have the air of belonging to people that are having nice times, and enjoying themselves, as we are. And, for my own part, I feel like sitting right down in them. All that round of party-going, and calling, and visiting, that I used to have to keep up, seems to me really wearisome. I want you to understand, Harry, that it's not the slightest sacrifice in the world for me to give it up. I'm just happy to be out of it."

"You see," said I, "we can sit down here and make our own world. Those that we really like very much and who like us very much will come to us. My ideal of good society is of a few congenial persons who can know each other very thoroughly, so as to feel perfectly acquainted and at home with one another. That was the secret of those reunions that went on so many years around Madame Récamier. It made no difference whether she lived in a palace, or a little obscure street; her friends were real friends, and followed her everywhere. The French have made a science of the cultivation of friendship, which is worth study."

Thus my wife and I chatted, and felicitated each other, in those first happy home-making days. There was never any end to our subjects of mutual conversation. Every little change in our arrangements was fruitful in conversation. We hung our pictures here at first, and liked them well, but our maturer second-thoughts received bright inspirations to take them down and hang them there; and then we liked them better. I must say, by the by, that I had committed one of those extravagances which lovers do commit when they shut their eyes and go it blind. I had bought back the pictures of Eva's little boudoir from Goupil's. The fact was that there was a considerable sympathy felt for Mr. Van Arsdel, and one of the members of the concern was a nice fellow, with whom I had some pleasant personal acquaintance. So that the redemption of the pictures was placed at a figure which made it possible for me to accomplish it. And the pictures themselves were an untold store of blessedness to us. I believe we took them all down and hung them over four times, on four successive days, before we were satisfied that we had come to ultimate perfection.

CHAPTER LII.

PREPARATIONS FOR OUR DINNER PARTY.

"HARRY," said my wife, the morning of the day of our projected house-warming, "there's one thing you must get me."

"Well, Princess?"

"Well, you know you and I don't care for wine and don't need it, and can't afford it, but I have such a pretty set of glasses and decanters, and you must get me a couple of bottles just to set off our table for celebration."

Immediately I thought of Bolton's letter, of what he had told me of the effect of wine upon his senses at Hestermann's dinner table. I knew it must not be at ours, but how to explain to my wife without compromising him! At a glance I saw that all through the future my intimacy with Bolton must be guided and colored by what I knew of his history, his peculiar struggles and temptations, and that not merely now, but on many future occasions, I should need a full understanding with my wife to act as I should be obliged to act. I reflected that Eva and I had ceased to be two and had become one, that I owed her an unlimited confidence in those respects where my actions must involve her comfort, or wishes, or coöperation.

"Eva, darling," I said, "you remember I told you there was a mystery about the separation of Bolton and Caroline."

"Yes, of course," said she, wondering, "but what has this to do with this wine question?"

"A great deal," I said, and going to my desk I took out Bolton's letter and put it into her hand. "Read that, my dear, and then tell me what to do." She took it and read with something of the eagerness of feminine curiosity while I left the room for a few moments. In a little while she came after me and laid her hand on my arm.

"Harry, dear," she said, "I'll stand by you in this thing. His secret shall be sacred with me, and I will make a safe harbor for him where he may have a home without danger. I want our house to seem like a home for him."

"You are an angel, Eva."

"Well, Harry, I must say I always have had conscience about offering wine to some young men that I knew ought to keep clear of it, but it never occurred to me in regard to such a grave noble man as Bolton."

We never know who may be in this danger. It is a diseased action of the nervous system—often inherited—a thing very little understood, like the tendency to insanity or epilepsy. But while we know such things are, we cannot be too careful.

"I should never have forgiven myself, Harry, if I had done it."

"The result would have been that Bolton would never have dined with us again, he is resolute to keep entirely out of all society where this temptation meets him."

"Well, we don't want it, don't need it, and won't have it. Mary makes magnificent coffee and that's ever so much better. So that matter is settled, Harry, and I'm ever and ever so glad you told me. I do admire him so much! There is something really sad and noble in his struggle."

"Many a man with that temptation who fails often exercises more self-denial, and self-restraint, than most Christians," said I.

"I'm sure I don't deny myself much. I generally want to do just what I do," said Eva.

"You always want to do all that is good and generous," said I.

"I think, on the whole," said Eva, reflectively, "my self-denial is in not doing what other people want me to. I'm like Mrs. Quickly. I want to please everybody. I wanted to please mamma and Aunt Maria."

"And came very near marrying a man you couldn't love purely to oblige people."

"If you hadn't rescued me," she said, laughing. "But now, Harry, really I want some little extravagance about our dinner. So if we don't have wine, buy the nicest of grapes and pears, and I will arrange a pretty fruit piece for the center of the table."

"My love, I will get you all the grapes and pears you want."

"And my little Ruth has sent me in this lovely tumbler of apple jelly. You see I held sweet council with her yesterday on the subject of jelly-making, where I am only a novice, and hers is splendid; literally now, splendid, for see how the light shines through it! And do you think the generous little Puss actually sent me in half a dozen tumblers."

"What a perfect saint!" said I.

"And I am to have all the flowers in her garden. She says the frost will take them in a day or two if we don't. Harry, next summer we must take lessons of her about our little back yard. I never saw so much made of so little ground."

"She'll be only too delightful," said I.

"Well, now, mind you are home at five. I want you to look the house over before your friends come, and see if I have got everything as pretty as it can be."

"Are they to '*process*' through the house and see your blue room, and your pink room, and your guest chamber, and all?"

"Yes. I want them to see all through how pretty the rooms are, and then sometimes, perhaps, we shall tempt them to stay all night."

"And sleep in the chamber that is called Peace," said I, "after the fashion of Pilgrim's Progress."

"Come, Harry, begone. I want you to go, so as to be sure and come back early."

CHAPTER LIII.

THE HOUSE-WARMING.

DEAR reader, fancy now a low-studded room, with crimson curtains and carpet, a deep recess filled by a crimson divan with pillows, the lower part of the room taken up by a row of book-shelves, three feet high, which ran all round the room and accommodated my library. The top of this formed a convenient shelf, on which all our pretty little wedding presents—statuettes, bronzes, and articles of *vertu*—were arranged. A fire-place, surrounded by an old-fashioned border of Dutch tiles, with a pair of grandmotherly brass andirons, rubbed and polished to an extreme of brightness, exhibits a wood fire, all laid in order to be lighted at the touch of the match. My wife has dressed the house with flowers, which our pretty little neighbor has almost stripped her garden to contribute. There are vases of fire-colored nasturtiums and many-hued chrysanthemums, the arrangement of which has cost the little artist an afternoon's study, but which I pronounce to be perfect. I have come home from my office an hour earlier to see if she has any commands.

"Here, Harry," she says, with a flushed face, "I believe everything now is about as perfect as it can be. Now come and stand at this door, and see how you think it would strike anybody, when they first came in. You see I've heaped up those bronze vases on the mantel with nothing but nasturtiums; and it has such a surprising effect in that dark bronze! Then I've arranged those white chrysanthemums right against these crimson curtains. And now come out in the dining-room, and see how I've set the dinner-table! You see I've the prettiest possible center-piece of fruit and flowers. Isn't it lovely?"

Of course I kissed her and said it was lovely, and that she was lovelier; and she was a regular little enchantress, witch, and fairy-queen, and ever so much more to the same purport. And then Alice came down, all equipped for conquest, as pretty an additional ornament to the house as heart could desire. And when the clock was on the stroke of six, and we heard the feet of our guests at the door, we lighted our altar-fire in the fire-place; for it must be understood that this was a pure *coup de théâtre,* a brightening, vivifying, ornamental luxury—one of the things we were determined to have, on the strength of having determined not to have a great many others. How proud we were when the blaze streamed up and lighted the whole room, fluttered on the pictures, glinted here and there on the gold bindings of the books, made dreamy lights and deep shadows, and called forth all the bright glowing color of the crimson tints which seemed to give out their very heart to firelight! My wife was evidently proud of the effect of all things in our rooms, which Jim declared looked warm enough to bring a dead man to life. Bolton was seated in due form in a great, deep arm-chair, which, we informed him, we had bought especially with reference to him, and the corner was to be known henceforth as his corner.

"Well," said he, with grave delight, "I have brought my final contribution to your establishment;" and forthwith from the capacious hinder pockets of his coat he drew forth a pair of kittens, and set them down on the hearth-rug. "There, Harry," he said, gravely, "there are a pair of ballet dancers that will perform for you gratis, at any time."

"Oh, the little witches, the perfect loves!" said my wife and Alice, rushing at them.

Bolton very gravely produced from his pocket two long strings with corks attached to them, and hanging them to the gas fixtures, began, as he said, to exhibit the ballet dancing, in which we all became profoundly interested. The wonderful leaps and flings and other achievements of the performers occupied the whole time till dinner was announced.

"Now, Harry," said my wife, "if we let Little Cub see the kittens, before she's waited on table, it'll utterly demoralize her. So we must shut them in carefully," which was done.

I don't think a dinner party was ever a more brilliant success than ours; partly owing to the fact that we were a mutual admiration society, and our guests felt about as much sense of appropriation and property in it as we did ourselves. The house was in a sort of measure "our house," and the dinner "our dinner." In short, we were all of us strictly *en famille.* The world was one thing, and we were another, outside of it and by ourselves, and having a remarkably good time. Everybody got some share of praise. Mary got praised for her cooking. The cooking-stove was glorified for baking so well, and Bolton was glorified for recommending the cooking-stove. And Jim and Alice and my wife congratulated each other on the lovely looks of the dining-room. We shuddered together in mutual horror over what the wall-paper there had been; and we felicitated the artists that had brought such brilliant results out of so little. The difficulties that had been overcome in matching the paper and arranging the panels were forcibly dwelt upon; and some sly jokes seemed to pass between Jim and Alice, applicable to certain turns of events in these past operations. After dinner we had most transcendent coffee, and returned to our parlor as gay of heart as if we had been merry with wine. The kittens had got thoroughly at home by that time, having investigated the whole of the apartment, and began exhibiting some of their most irresistible antics, with a social success among us of a most flattering nature. Alice declared that she should call them Taglioni and Madame Céleste, and proceeded to tie blue and pink bows upon their necks, which they scratched and growled at in quite a warlike manner. A low whine from the entry interrupted us; and Eva, opening the door and looking out, saw poor old Stumpy sitting on the mat, with the most good-dog air of dejected patience.

"Why, here's Stumpy, poor fellow!" she said.

"Oh, don't trouble yourself about him," said Bolton. "I've taught him to sit out on the mat. He's happy enough if he only thinks I'm inside."

"But, poor fellow," said Eva, "he looks as if he wanted to come in."

"Oh, he'll do well enough; never mind him," said Bolton, looking a little embarrassed. "It was silly of me to bring him, only he is so desolate to have me go out without him."

"Well, he shall come in," said Eva. "Come in, you poor homely old fellow," she said. "I daresay you're as good as an angel; and to-night's my house-warming, and not even a dog shall have an ungratified desire, if I can help it."

So poor Stumpy was installed by Bolton in the corner, and looked perfectly beatified.

And now, while we have brought all our characters before the curtain, and the tableau of the fireside is complete, as we sit there all around the hearth, each perfectly at home with the other, in heart and mind, and with even the poor beasts that connect us with the lower world brightening in our enjoyment, this is a good moment for the curtain to fall on the fortunes of

MY WIFE AND I.

THE END.

P. S.—If our kind readers still retain a friendly interest in the fortunes of any of the actors in this story, they may hear again from us at some future day, in the

RECORDS OF AN UNFASHIONABLE STREET.

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED

LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below, or
on the date to which renewed.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

APR 1 9 1968 2 6
REC'D LD OCT 8 '68 -6PM
DEC 7 1969
REC'D LD JAN 7 - '70 -4PM
JAN 1 6 1982 8
JUN 4 1978
July 4, 78
REC. CIR. JUL 3 0 1981
REC. CIR. JUL 1 1 '78
DEC 21 1984
MAY 2 9 1980
REC. CIR. DEC 1 3 1984
REC. CIR. MAY 6 1980
AUG 1 0 1990
DISC
SEP 2 0 1990
AUG 0 8 1988
CIRCULATION
AUG 25 1988
Oct. 26

LD 21A-15m-9,'67
(H5067s10)476B

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

GENERAL LIBRARY - U.C. BERKELEY

B000718076

RY